Smarty Jones Runs Away with the Preakness

Sports Illustrated

PLAYOFFS
NBA GAME 7 NHL TIME
PLUS: BEST ALLTIME 7TH GAMES

Bringing It Home

The Best of Times for Roger Clemens

By TOM VERDUCCI

The Rocket lifts off at 7–0 in Houston

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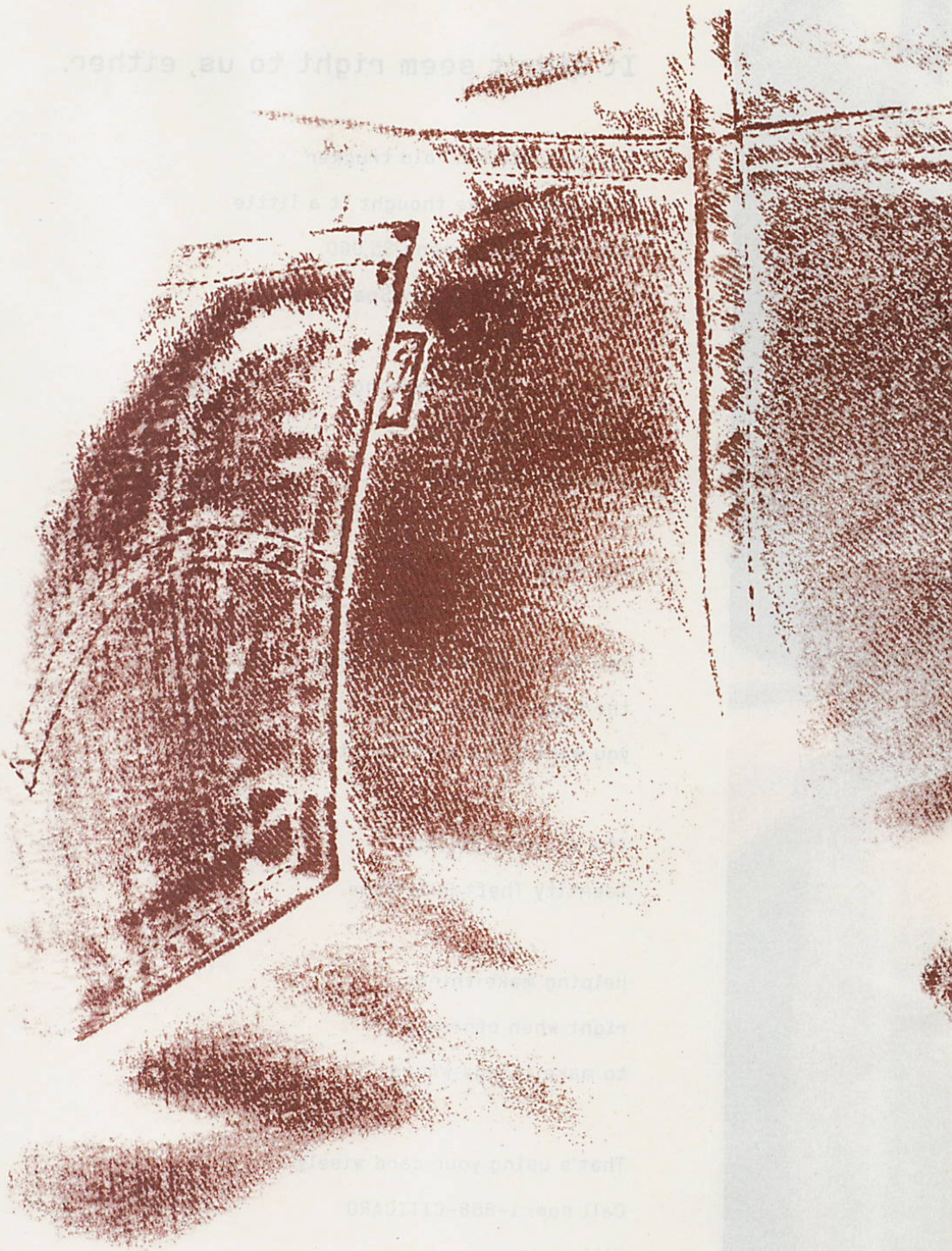

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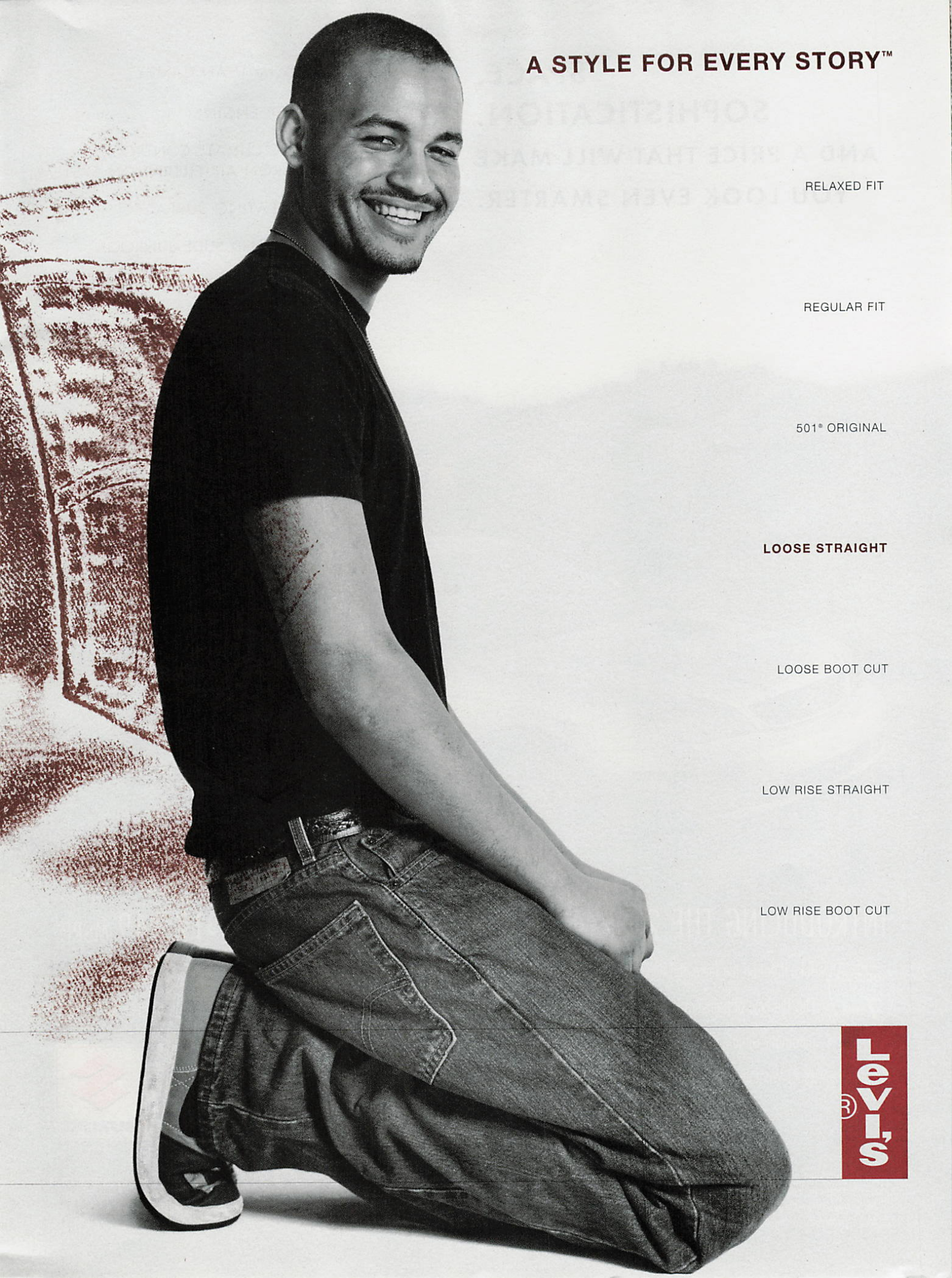
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Sports Illustrated
May 24, 2004
VOLUME 100, NO. 21

The Lineup

GATE CRASHERS Smarty Jones (7) would soon give all the other horses a taste of his dust (page 46).

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PHOTOGRAPH BY
JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES
INSET PHOTO: BILL FRAKES
COVER FLAP PHOTOS: ROBERT BECK (SOCCER); CHRIS BERNACCHI/SPORTPICS

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SI.com
Rocket science: For a by-the-numbers review of Roger Clemens's career—including a game-by-game log, stats and SI Flashbacks—go to **si.com/baseball.**

BILL FRAKES (PREAKNESS; EXTENSION BY SI IMAGING); BOB ROSATO

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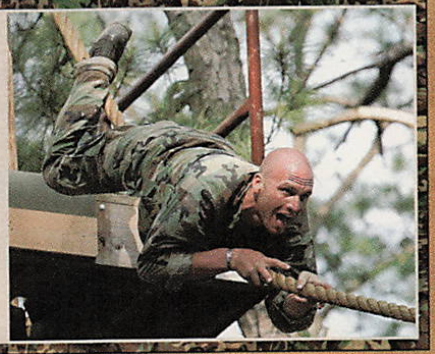

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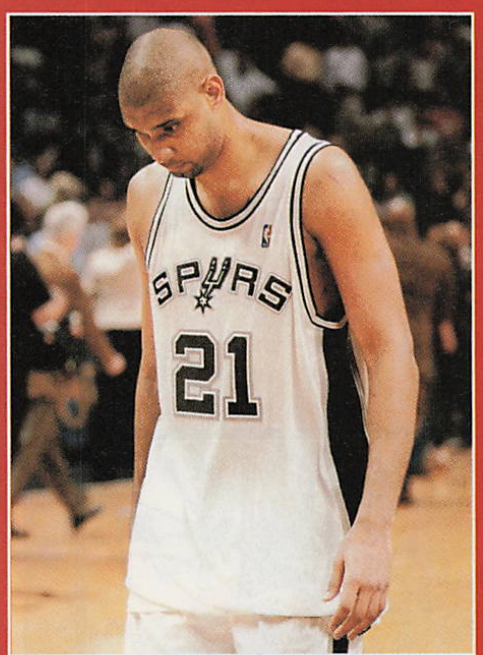
.4-Gone Conclusion

After an inbounds pass with .4 of a second left, Lakers guard Derek Fisher launches an 18-footer just as the buzzer sounds to beat Tim Duncan (inset) and his Spurs in Game 5 of their second-round series of the NBA playoffs in San Antonio last Thursday (page 54).

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN W. McDONOUGH
INSET BY JOE MITCHELL/REUTERS



Leading Off

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Leading Off

Orange Crush

Philadelphia fans show their support by dressing for the occasion as the Flyers prepare to take on the Tampa Bay Lightning in Game 4 of the NHL Eastern Conference finals in Philadelphia last Saturday. The Flyers won the game 3–2 to even the series at 2–2 (page 66).

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE SANFORD/GETTY IMAGES

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DODGE
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Driving with JESUS
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Leading Off

It All Ads Up

These 38 starters (from the field of 43) carried their corporate colors into NASCAR's Auto Club 500, which was run on May 2 at the California Speedway in Fontana. The race was won by Jeff Gordon (24), sporting the fiery Dupont logo.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN CORDES/ICON SMI

Beer Drinkers of America:

Recently, it has been brought to our attention that our honorable opposition have anointed themselves the King of Beers. Yes, you read correctly: The *King* of Beers.

Perhaps they didn't get the memo.

This is America! We don't kowtow to a bunch of tiara-wearing crumpet eaters. No, if we are to believe the textbooks, America is a democracy with a little something called Freedom of Choice.

To that end, we are hereby announcing Miller's candidacy for the *President of Beers.*

Here's our platform.

Miller Lite - the great-tasting, less-filling beer with half the carbs of Bud Light.

Miller Genuine Draft - a beer with genuine flavor that's cold-filtered smooth.

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But remember, when you cast your vote for Miller, you're casting a vote for democracy, hot dogs, apple pie, baseball, miniature golf, double dating, a rich variety of cheeses, two major oceans, a terrific space program, a Constitution with NO spelling errors, the right to a free and televised trial, beer of unquestionable character, color and flavor and the whole big AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE!

Sincerely,

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P.S. The fate of the beer world hangs in the balance. Choose wisely. Thx.

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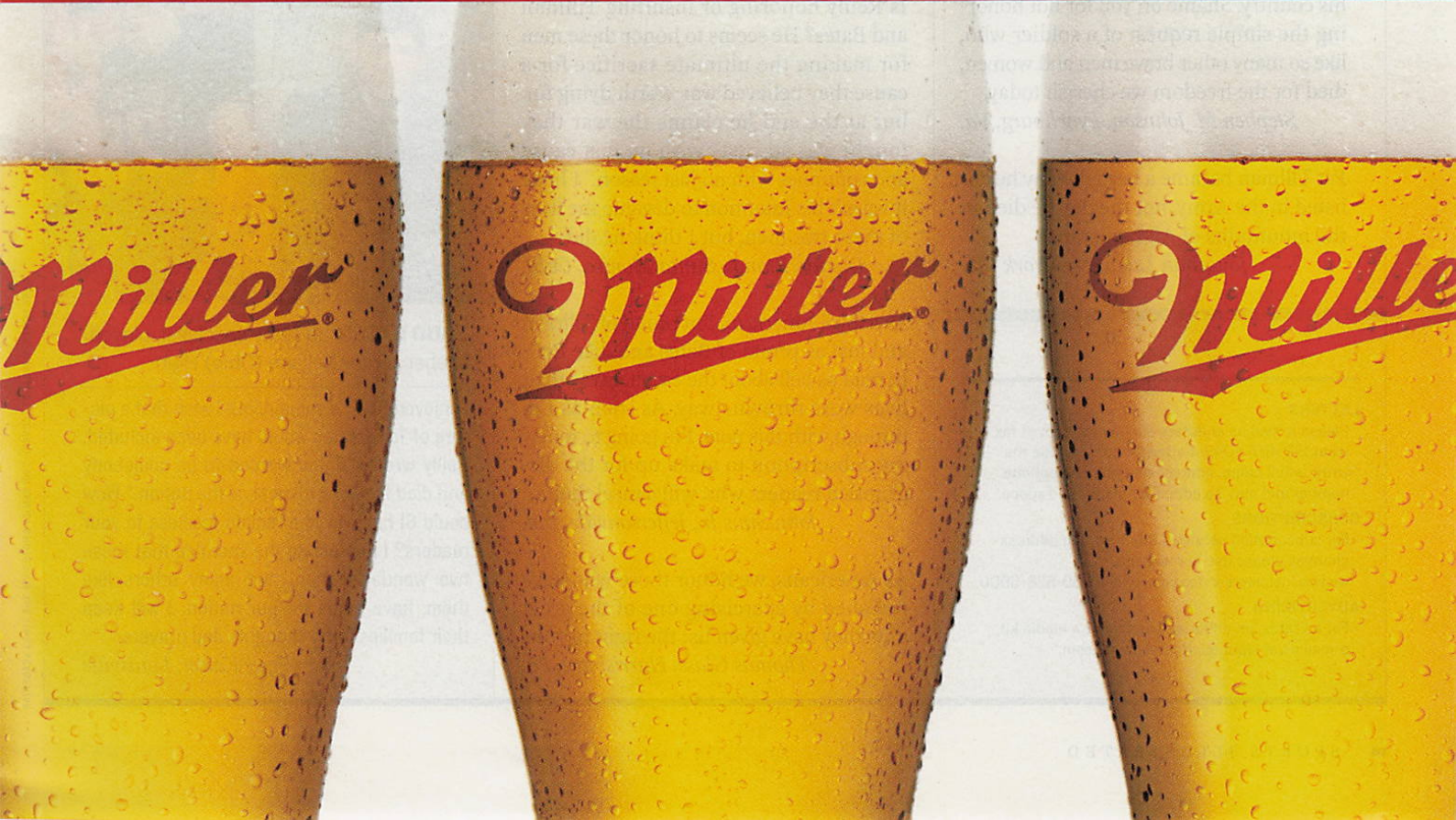
★ ★ ★ CHOOSE ★ ★ ★

TASTE

GOOD CALL IN '04



Pat Tillman

This letter is almost three years too late; I meant to write it when I first heard of Pat Tillman's amazing sacrifice in honor of those who died on Sept. 11, including my brother, William C. Hunt. Gary Smith does a great job of capturing Tillman's thoughts, feelings and emotions from his recruiting trip to Arizona State through his final moments in the woods of Afghanistan (*Code of Honor*, May 3). Reading the article, I felt the devotion of a young man who truly knew that he would make a difference in life.

Dan Hunt, Waltham, Mass.

I am not inspired by Tillman's choice to leave millions of dollars and a career in the NFL behind. I'm more inspired by his conviction that he must serve America—to preserve our freedoms—and his desire to remain anonymous.

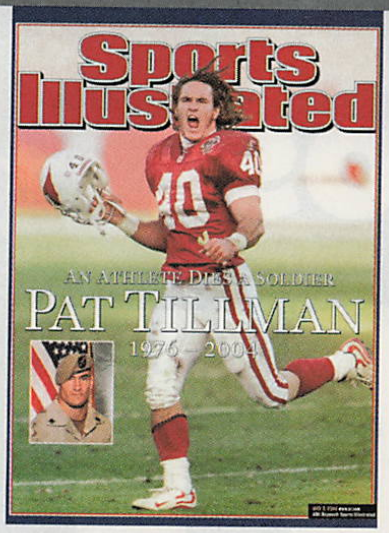
Brett Gingold, Bend, Ore.

Tillman wouldn't have wanted you to glorify him for losing his life while serving his country. Shame on you for not honoring the simple request of a soldier who, like so many other brave men and women, died for the freedom we cherish today.

Stephen M. Johnson, Lynchburg, Va.

Pat Tillman became a hero the day he enlisted in the Army, not the day he died in the mountains of Afghanistan.

Jonathan Levin, New York City



PUBLIC DEBATE The May 3 issue drew over 3,300 letters, an SI record.

Split Vote

I know the public does not understand the global war on terrorism. I know this because Rick Reilly and, undoubtedly, countless others are furious that it takes the lives of soldiers like Pat Tillman and Todd Bates (THE LIFE OF REILLY, May 3). Well, I'm furious, too. As an Army officer who recently served in Iraq and who was privileged to command a soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice, I know too well the cost of this war. We have the power to help a people in need escape the bonds of tyranny, and for that reason alone we have the responsibility to do so. Yes, the cost of freedom can be unbearably high, but the cost of indifference is unconscionable.

Capt. Rick Burtt, U.S. Army
Arvada, Colo.

Reilly is entitled to his opinions about the war, but a sports magazine is not the place to air those views.

Paul Curran, Clarks Green, Pa.

Is Reilly honoring or insulting Tillman and Bates? He seems to honor these men for making the ultimate sacrifice for a cause they believed was worth dying for, but at the end he claims the war they fought was started "with no just cause and continues with no just reason." I hope it wasn't his intention to devalue the lives of these two men, but I think he did.

Damon Ramos, Santa Monica, Calif.

As a loyal American, I'm proud of Tillman and just as proud of Bates and, like Reilly, mad as hell about the cavalier way their lives were thrown away. As soon as I'm through with this note, I'm going to renew my subscription to make up for the disgruntled readers who will cancel theirs.

John Sims Jr., Jeffersonville, Ind.

As Americans, we honor those who have perished by exercising one of the great gifts they have given us: the right to vote.

Thomas Glass, Harrisburg, Pa.

Reilly movingly expresses the thoughts and feelings of many Americans who believe that it is indeed patriotic to take a stand against this senseless war.

Jeff Creswell, Portland

After Sept. 11, Afghanistan was a necessary war. Iraq clearly was not. Had we finished the job we started in Afghanistan and not stripped it of military assets to send to Iraq, both Pat and Todd might still be alive today, along with hundreds of others of America's finest men and women.

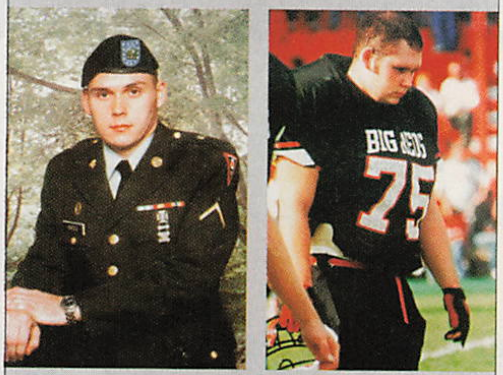
Lieut. Col. Bob McMullin
U.S. Army (ret.), Burke, Va.

Measuring Manning

It is ironic that only a few pages separated stories about Tillman and Eli Manning (*What a Manning Wants*, May 3). While Tillman gave his life for the very freedom that makes this country what it is, Manning manipulated the NFL draft for his own gain. I am sure that the majority of this country realizes that the real American heroes are in the rubble of the Twin Towers and the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, and not on the playing fields of the NFL.

Rick Diggs, Severna Park, Md.

The Face of a Soldier



TODD BATES, an Army specialist, played linebacker for Bellaire (Ohio) High.

I enjoyed Reilly's column, but I wish that a picture of Todd Bates would have been included. Reilly wrote, "Bates wanted to be somebody and died faceless to most of the nation." How could SI have let him remain faceless to your readers? I appreciate the sacrifice that these two wonderful men, and many others like them, have made for our nation. I will keep their families in my thoughts and prayers.

Peggy Kaiser, Louisville

GENE LOWER/SLINGSHOT (COVER); TWO FAMILY PHOTOS VIA THE TIMES LEADER/AP

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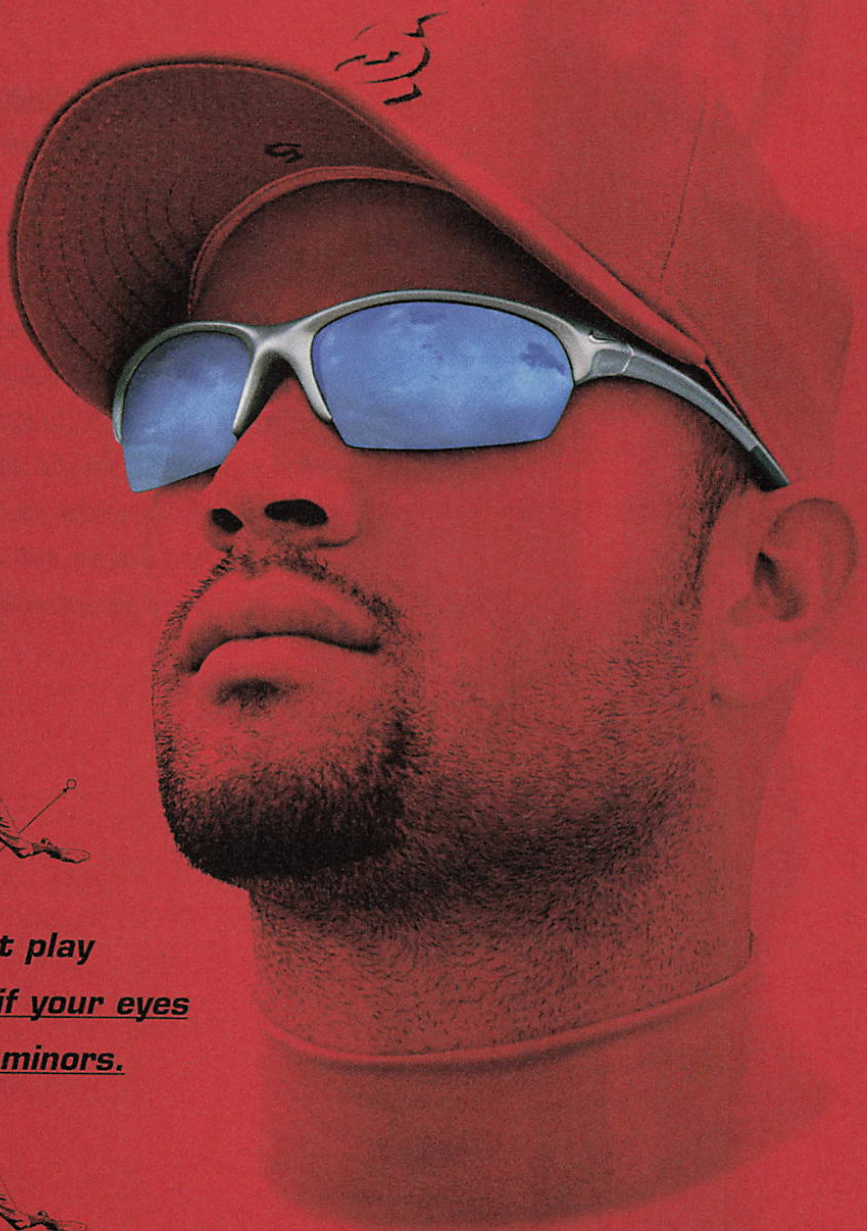

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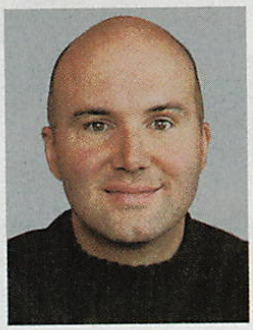
The First and Last Annual Alphabet Awards



SIMON BRUTY

by Steve Rushin

NUMBERS DON'T lie, but letters sometimes stretch the truth. KFC now pretends, in commercials, to stand for Kitchen Fresh Chicken, and it can't be long before we see the similar rebranding of Fatburger (to Fitburger) and IHOP (as in, I'll Have Oatmeal, Please). Worse, San Francisco Giants rookie David Aardsma is now, alphabetically speaking, the first surname in baseball, supplanting Hank Aaron at the front of the game's alltime roll call, in the way that AAA Locksmith weasels its way to the front of the business listings, line-jumping worthier tradesmen like Aardvark Tamers and Abacus Salesmen.

Though the Giants recently demoted Aardsma—to Triple A, aptly enough—the fact remains: In sports, the letter A will always belong to Aaron. Or will it? To avoid future confusion, we hereby award 26 letter jackets, assigning each letter of the alphabet to the greatest sportsman whose surname begins with that letter, thus answering the question I hear most often in sports: Who's the biggest A you've ever met? (Polite answer: Muhammad Ali.)

B's a bee-yotch. How to choose among Barry Bonds, Larry Bird and David Beckham? Easy. They're B-listers, bowing down before Jim Brown, who never missed a game in nine seasons.

For their success at stud, Citation and Wilt Chamberlain vie for the C, but not even Bob Cousy or Roger Clemens can compete with Ty Cobb, cantankerous cuss. D is a death match between Joe DiMaggio and Babe Didrikson. The winner had a sweet swing, a celebrity spouse and a famous nickname. The loser sold Mr. Coffees. Sport's biggest E's were Andy Etchebarren's eyebrows, but they—and Erving, Earnhardt and Evert—lose, on a last-second drive, to Elway.

F: If boxing, baseball and football really *are* chess matches, then Bobby Fischer is a better athlete than Joe Frazier, Bob Feller and Brett Favre. G: The Great Gretzky, more than Red Grange, Lou Gehrig or Steffi Graf, dwarfed all others in his sport, as did Ben Hogan—H—in his.

I is the exclusive isle of Allen Iverson, whose thin competition—Michael Irvin? *Monte* Irvin?—was voted off that island early, leaving AI to cannibalize his cofinalists, Dane and Garth Iorg.

Michael Jordan shot (and earned) the J. Sandy Koufax threw—and drew—our K, with Evel Knievel (again) falling short by inches. The cursive L sewn to the baby-blue sweater of Laverne, on *Laverne & Shirley*, would not look as divine on Joe Louis or Carl Lewis as it does on Vince Lombardi. Diego Maradona was a better footballer than Joe Montana and Dan Marino combined. Rocky Marciano never lost, Man o' War was beaten once, but none of these M's—nor Musial, nor Mantle—was Willie Mays.

N? Nicklaus. *Next!*

Had Bobby Orr beaten Hitler with his headlong goal in the '70 Stanley Cup, had Shaquille O'Neal head-faked the Führer in the '02 Finals, either might own the O now worn, like a halo, by Jesse Owens.

Palmer? Payton? Petty? Puh-*lease*. P is Pelé, period.

Our Q, strangely, has the lowest Q rating of any letter-winner. Yet here he is, Dan Quisenberry, who uttered the line: "I found a delivery in my flaw." If championships are the measure of the man, then the R rightfully belongs to be-ringed Bill Russell (11 titles), with Babe Ruth (seven) finishing *third*, behind Rocket Richard (eight). Among the S's, Secretariat would have been lightning-fast without a jockey, but Willie Shoemaker would *not* have been without a horse. Advantage, Secretariat.

Who would win a prison decathlon, atop the T's, between Iron Mike Tyson and Big Bill Tilden, men with little in common save athletic dominance and incarceration for sex crimes? Jim Thorpe, during visiting hours, that's who.

Bob Uecker was told by Birdie Tebbetts before his first major league baseball game, "Son, up here we wear the supporter on the *inside* of the uniform." It's with regret, then, that we give the U to Johnny Unitas.

The R belongs to be-ringed Bill Russell (11 titles), with Babe Ruth (seven) finishing behind Rocket Richard (eight).

Sports have seen more sweet vans (Brad Van Pelt, Andy Van Slyke, Johnny Vander Meer) than the members of Phish. But one—Norm Van Brocklin—stands out, victorious in the V's by a nose over Dazzy Vance, who didn't win his first big-league game till he was 31 and still pitched himself into the Hall of Fame.

W is President, but the nation's highest-ranking W remains neither he nor Ted Williams nor Tiger Woods. It's John (the Wizard of Westwood) Wooden, a man who has more W's to his name than any other figure in sports.

X is *not* the domain of Olympic champion diver Ni Xiong. It belongs to the shoeless and illiterate Joe Jackson, who signed his confession in the Black Sox scandal with that very letter.

Cy Young will forever wear a Y on his chest, like a Yale letter winner, but only because we couldn't knit one big enough for *the* Y, in Springfield, Mass., where James Naismith invented basketball, the sport played by the memorably named . . .

. . . Wang Zhizhi, formerly of the Dallas Mavericks. But he isn't our Z, nor are any of those hockey Zhamnovs, Zholtoks or Zhitniks, nor the Zimmers, Zisks and Zernials of baseball. Emile Zatopek would beat our winner in a footrace, but still we honor Zippy Chippy, who deserves to finish here as he did in nearly 100 races: dead last. □

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SCORECARD

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Sigh of the Tiger

For Tiger Woods, whose rapid ascension left him nowhere to go but down, these are the bad old days. Can he get his game back in time for the U.S. Open?

AS TIGER WOODS has slashed and hacked his way through this year's PGA Tour schedule, he's heard more and more of the dreaded s-word: *slump*. By his own impossibly high standards Woods has been slumping since 2000, when at age 24 he won nine tournaments, including three majors, in what is widely considered to be the greatest season in golf history. He is still ranked No. 1 in the world, as he has been for each of the past 253 weeks, and he's third on the money list. The notion of his being in a slump is so preposterous that it has obscured an unavoidable truth: He really *is* in a slump, and it's getting worse by the week.

Once an overwhelming combination of power and precision, Woods has sunk to 159th in driving accuracy and 68th in greens in regulation. He hasn't won a stroke play tournament all year. While making what he calls "minor adjustments" to his swing, Woods has basically been reduced to slapping the ball around and eking out a number with guts and a spectacular short game. He has, in other words, turned into a flashier version of Brad Faxon.

There was a time when all Woods had to do was put his name on the leader board and everybody else's collar got tight: Coming into this year he had converted 18 consecutive 36-hole leads into victories. But in each of the past two weeks he's blown Friday-evening leads. This isn't exactly ideal preparation for next month's U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills, which is suddenly being spoken of as one of the most important tournaments Woods will ever play. The Open will mark the two-year anniversary of his last win in a major championship. Not coincidentally, the summer of 2002 was when Woods parted ways with Butch Harmon, his celebrated swing instructor. As Woods's struggles have intensified, the Greek chorus has called for him to swallow his considerable pride and go back to "Butchie," who fussed over his client's every twitch as Woods won eight professional majors and three U.S. Amateurs. But Harmon's brother, Bill, has observed that Butch and Tiger are trying to "outstubborn" each other, leaving no end in sight to their stalemate.

Over the last couple of years, Woods has increasingly relied on his friend Mark O'Meara for input, with help from O'Meara's instructor Hank Haney. Woods and Haney have both played down their relationship, but the week before the Masters they worked together on the range at Woods's home course in Orlando. Last week Haney walked a practice round with Woods and O'Meara, and afterward a tight-lipped Woods allowed that he had asked for Haney's counsel on his takeaway.

O'Meara and Haney have very different ideas from Harmon on how to swing the club, and it has become clear that Woods has failed to synthesize these clashing ideologies. His deteriorating technique is most apparent in his driving. In his last two tournaments Woods has hit just 42% of his fairways. If his driving is that wild at Shinnecock Hills, which presents one of the most exacting tests in championship golf, Woods can forget about keeping his streak of making 123 consecutive cuts alive, let alone winning. He'll be lucky to break 80.

Woods has relentlessly worked on his game since he was in diapers, and he will continue to chase his old form, even as it seems increasingly unattainable. Says O'Meara, "The way he looks at it, you're either getting better or getting worse. And if you're getting worse, you've gotta figure out a way to get it going in the other direction." Woods expressed a rare vulnerability last week when talking about trying to trust his swing changes. "You can hit things on the range," he said, "but when you've got water left, water right, bunkers, the wind is blowing, you've got to hit the ball into a tight spot, yeah, it makes it a little more stressful." The one good thing about Woods being repeatedly beaten up by the game is that this most imperious of competitors has never seemed more human.

—Alan Shipnuck

ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE BRODNER

Escape Artist

Missouri's coach survived an NCAA investigation, but did his reputation?

NOT LONG AGO Missouri's Quin Snyder was considered the best and the brightest of the nation's young basketball coaches, the odds-on favorite to succeed his mentor, Mike Krzyzewski, at Duke. No longer. The Tigers were the nation's biggest disappointment last season, tumbling from a preseason Top 10 ranking to a 16–14 record and missing the NCAA tournament. Last week Snyder took another hit when the NCAA said that it had discovered nine rules violations in the Missouri program.

HARD TIMES Trouble with the NCAA—and trouble winning—has sent Snyder's star falling.

It could have been worse. The NCAA was unable to support allegations of player payoffs and academic fraud, and the Tigers will not be barred from postseason play. But while Snyder, 37, said he "accepts full responsibility," the fallout followed the usual script: The coach apologized and kept his job, while his assistants headed for the exits. (Lane Odom resigned last week; Tony Harvey is on paid suspension and isn't expected to return.) Yet restoring Snyder's image won't be easy. Since he took over in 1999, his program has accumulated more than two dozen minor violations. Now SI has learned that Snyder provided a favor to an out-of-work coach whom the NCAA interviewed twice during its investigation of Missouri.

Jay Cyriac was an assistant at the College of Southern Idaho, the school Uche Okafor attended before signing with Missouri in 2001. (The NCAA looked into Missouri's recruiting of Okafor but found no violations.) In June '03 Cyriac accepted a job as DePaul's director of basketball operations, but the school rescinded the offer, citing the NCAA's refusal to give him a clean bill of health. Cyriac, 29, then moved in with his parents in Elizabeth, N.J., and took a job as a furniture-store security guard.

Since last fall, though, Cyriac has also worked as a scout with the Philadelphia 76ers, where his boss is general manager Billy King, a friend and former teammate of Snyder's at Duke. Cyriac, who shares a lawyer with Snyder, admitted that Snyder "put in a call" to King last fall to help arrange the job for him. Was that a payback to Cyriac, a coach with a tainted reputation who could have implicated Missouri in the suspect recruitment of Okafor? No, Snyder says; he was merely helping a colleague down on his luck: "I was impressed with his work ethic and made a call on his behalf, just as I am fortunate that many individuals have offered to help me along the way."

—Grant Wahl

GO FIGURE

35 Percentage of male athletes who admitted in an NCAA survey to gambling on college sports last year.

1.4 Percentage of college football players who admitted altering their performance to change the outcome of a game last year.

0 Losses for Arsenal (which had 26 wins and 12 draws), the first team to go undefeated in English soccer's top division in 115 years.

.712 Career winning percentage of Oakland's Tim Hudson (84–34), second only to Spud Chandler (.717) among pitchers with 50 or more wins.

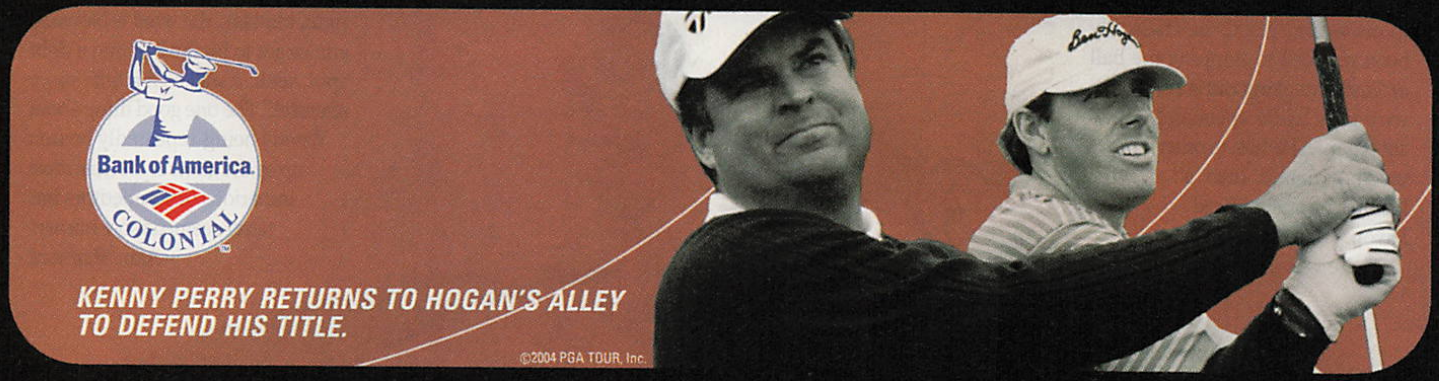
5 Consecutive series lost by the Braves, their longest streak since 1988.

81 Age that Penn State football coach Joe Paterno—who has had a losing record in three of the past four seasons—will be when the four-year extension he received last week expires.

1–11 The Rockies' record this year when Todd Greene starts at catcher.

15–10 The Rockies' record this year when Todd Greene does not start at catcher.

DAVID E. KLUTHO



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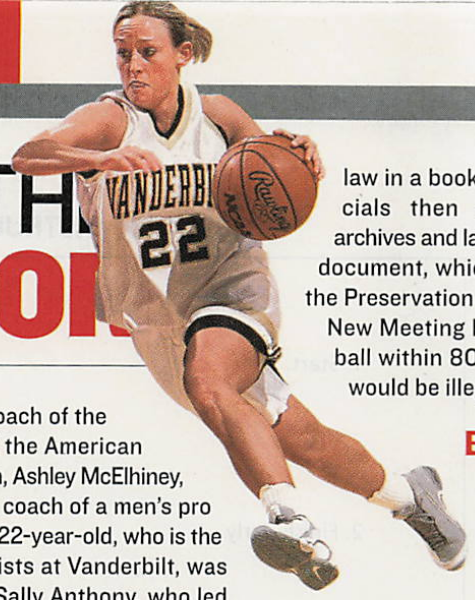
FOR THE RECORD



McElhiney

Named As head coach of the Nashville Rhythm of the American Basketball Association, Ashley McElhiney, the first female head coach of a men's pro basketball team. The 22-year-old, who is the alltime leader in assists at Vanderbilt, was hired by pop singer Sally Anthony, who led the group that purchased the ABA expansion franchise in February. "My goal [is] not only to put a competitive team on the floor but to give qualified females opportunities they are not normally afforded," Anthony said. "Ultimately, I think the Nashville Rhythm, and the ABA as a whole, can be a stepping-stone for a qualified woman to coach in the NBA."

Unveiled By officials in Pittsfield, Mass., a document written in 1791 that outlawed playing baseball near the town meetinghouse. It is the oldest recorded reference to the national pastime, coming 32 years before two newspaper stories mentioned the game being played in Manhattan and 48 years before Abner Doubleday supposedly invented baseball in Cooperstown, N.Y. While researching a book on the game's origins, baseball historian John Thorn found a reference to the law in a book about Pittsfield. Officials then searched the town archives and last week discovered the document, which proclaims that "for the Preservation of the Windows in the New Meeting House," playing baseball within 80 yards of the building would be illegal.

Banned By a federal judge, direct communication between Mike Danton, the Blues' center accused of conspiring to hire a hit man last month, and his agent, mentor and alleged intended target, David Frost. The two had been in nearly daily contact since Danton's April 16 arrest, and earlier this month Frost orchestrated a public statement by Danton without consulting Danton's lawyer. Danton, who is being held without bail awaiting a July 20 trial, may talk to Frost's wife and two children as long as they don't discuss the case. But Judge Michael Reagan warned Danton, "Your best friends now are your attorneys. . . . It's best to keep your mouth shut."

Launched By the Center for the Study of Sport in Society (CSSS) and Youth Sports USA, a national Sportsmanship 1st campaign. Children, parents and coaches in all youth sports organizations will be asked to sign a one-page contract stating that they will exhibit good sportsmanship, and before each game players, coaches and referees will shake hands and recite a pledge vowing to put sportsmanship first. "Of the 40 million kids who participate in youth sports, 70 percent quit before the age of 13," says former Harvard basketball coach Peter Roby, the director of CSSS. "And the Number 1 reason they give is that it's no fun."

Botched By McFarlane Toys, a set of figurines representing Flames captain Jarome Iginla and Canadiens forward Saku Koivu. Iginla *(upper right)*, the NHL's leading goal scorer this season and whose father is Nigerian, has been referred to as "the black Gordie Howe." But for fans who bought the two-figure pack, that would be a far more fitting title for Koivu, who is Finnish. "Saku mistakenly got the darker skin wash in this set," said Mark Weber, sports manager for McFarlane Toys. Weber apologized for the error but said there are no plans to recall the $8.99 figurines—which are being sold for $75 on eBay.

Doubling Down

STRANGE BUT TRUE!

Won By 15-year-old twins Alex and Scott Chun, arguably the most coincidence-laden high school doubles tennis match ever played. Fighting a case of double vision, the freshman duo beat twins Eric and Spencer MacColl 6–4, 4–6, 11–9 for the Marin County (Calif.) title on May 5. All of the competitors were born at the same San Francisco hospital on Feb. 13—the MacColl brothers in 1988 and the Chuns in '89. "It's kind of freaky," says Alex, who attends Tamalpais High with his brother. "We looked across the net and saw two guys who looked the same. I guess that's what people see when they look at us."

During the match, which was played the afternoon of a full moon, both teams displayed twinlike telepathy—each MacColl said he had a premonition his brother would double fault during the match, and in each case it happened—and clonelike form. "Both teams were so in sync that it was almost as if they were doing a dance," says Carrie Zarraonandia, the tennis coach at Redwood High, where the MacColls are sophomores.

The pairs of identical twins grew up about 10 miles apart but didn't meet until three years ago at a tennis clinic. They got to talking and discovered they had a lot in common: They all love the Bryan brothers (the identical twins who play for the U.S. Davis Cup team), each shares a bedroom with his twin, and they all play stringed musical instruments. "It's pretty cool," Spencer says. "We've met brothers who play together but never twins." The MacColls and the Chuns have faced each other in singles matches, but their doubles showdown at the league finals was their first meeting as a foursome. "It kicked in that this was pretty freaky after we played them," Eric says. "And it got even weirder when we talked with them after the match. They were *exactly* the same. And I'm sure they were thinking the same thing about us. You know, I couldn't tell them apart."

—Yi-Wyn Yen

TWINS PEAK Eric, Alex, Scott and Spencer (clockwise from top left) make up the top doubles teams in their county.

DAMIAN STROHMEYER (MCELHINEY); RICHARD ARLESS JR./GAZETTE, MONTREAL (FIGURINES); SHELLY CASTELLANO/ICON SMI (IGINLA); FREESTYLE/ICON SMI (KOIVU); JAMES SUGAR (TWINS); THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (BASEBALL)

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THE SHOW | BY BILL SCHEFT

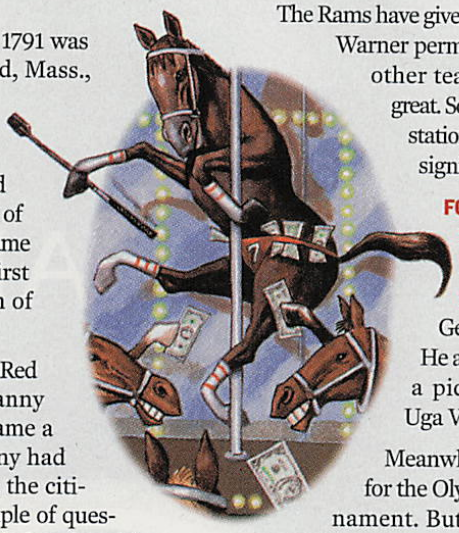
Try to keep it down. We don't want to wake up Roy Jones Jr.

SMARTY JONES ROMPS BY 11½ LENGTHS IN PREAKNESS In the 13 days between victories, Smarty did not have a workout. However, on Thursday afternoon in the paddock, he did 20 minutes of Strippercise.

Gary Stevens flew in from Paris to ride runner-up Rock Hard Ten. I guess Tobey Maguire couldn't make weight.

MLB MOVES OFFICIAL DRUG TESTING FACILITIES TO LAB IN MONTREAL Are you like me? Are you expecting Bud Selig to announce that 22 samples this season will be processed in San Juan?

Previously, much of the testing had been done at a laboratory in Southern California. I believe it was called Centrifuges 'n Things.



A document from 1791 was found in Pittsfield, Mass., which contains the first recorded mention of the word baseball. And what are the odds of this? Later in the same document is the first recorded mention of Spider-Man.

Congratulations to Red Sox outfielder Manny Ramirez who became a U.S. citizen. Manny had done very well on the citizenship test. A couple of questions were over his head and he didn't even drop his bat and charge the test monitor.

Roger Clemens is 7–0. And I'm not sure if this is part of his contract, but during his last start he got a visit on the mound from Astros pitching coach Burt Hooten and three visits from his sons.

LAKERS GET OVER THEMSELVES, GET OVER ON SPURS Kobe Bryant went for a double double in the deciding game: 26 points, 12 words spoken to Phil Jackson.

Not exactly offensive fireworks in the playoffs. TNT is thinking of changing its slogan to, "Shoot 32% from the floor, or go home."

FLYERS-LIGHTNING SERIES STARTS UGLY, GETS UGLIER Philadelphia coach Ken Hitchcock claimed fans in Tampa were throwing food at his players. Not only that, it was stuff Jeremy Roenick is still not allowed to chew.

During Game 1, the Lightning offered free beer to anyone who put down a deposit on season tickets for next year. By the third period they had to add an express lane to the men's room.

I don't get it. This is the one season in Tampa Bay you didn't have to be drunk to enjoy the team.

Free beer, but there was one catch. Before every refill you had to touch your finger to your nose and spell *Khabibulin*.

***NFL TODAY* WAIVES DEION SANDERS** Sad the way it happened. CBS told Deion's tailor to let out his contract.

The Rams have given quarterback Kurt Warner permission to talk with other teams. It's working great. So far 20 call-in radio stations are interested in signing his wife.

FORMER PRESIDENT BUSH TO LEAD U.S. DELEGATION INTO ATHENS His son George W. is thrilled. He asked his dad to get a picture taken with Uga VI.

Meanwhile, Iraq qualified for the Olympic soccer tournament. But that didn't stop Halliburton from requesting $50 million to rebuild the team.

BCS SIMPLIFICATIONS DISCUSSED If the proposed new system had been in place, this year's national championship would have been LSU versus Clay Aiken.

SYRACUSE CHANGES NICKNAME FROM ORANGEMEN TO ORANGE Great marketing strategy. Why be represented by some cute, innocuous mascot when you can be associated with a threat level on the terror alert chart?

My time is up. You've been great. Enjoy Katrina and the Waves.

Bill Scheft is almost finished writing a television pilot for David E. Kelley, The Practice . . . Tee.

Q+A TIM RUSSERT

The moderator of NBC's *Meet the Press*—and a die-hard Bills fan—is the author of *Big Russ & Me*, a memoir about his father.

Norwood on his mind

SI: *The Yankees have Alex Rodriguez signed through 2010, while NBC locked you up through 2012. Which organization got the better long-term deal?*
Russert: Well, *I'm* playing my original position.

SI: *Do former athletes make good politicians?*
Russert: They're pretty good politicians because they are take-charge guys who are used to being leaders. Woodrow Wilson said that the demands of the presidency are so difficult that we would soon be forced to choose our chief executives from "among wise and prudent athletes—a small class."

SI: *Will the Bills win the Super Bowl in your lifetime?*
Russert: I think they will. Scott Norwood once came up to me at the airport and said, "I just want to introduce myself. I'm Scott Norwood." I said, "Scott, I know who you are. I think about you every night."

SI: *You live in Washington, so how hard on you was the Bills' loss to the Redskins in Super Bowl XXVI?*
Russert: I lost my shirt. I bet everybody in the bureau. The day before that game, though, I ran into a woman who said, "Mr. Russert, I'm for the Bills, too." I said, "Are you from Buffalo?" And she said, "No. I'm Jack Kent Cooke's former mother-in-law."

SI: *How did your dad react when you were elected to the board of directors of the Baseball Hall of Fame?*
Russert: He asked if I could get free passes.

SI: *On the set of* Meet the Press *does the discussion ever turn to sports?*
Russert: Frequently. With John McCain about boxing, with Condoleezza Rice about her desire to be commissioner of the NFL. And with George W. Bush about trading Sammy Sosa.

SI: *Which athlete made the best interview subject?*
Russert: Yogi Berra, the philosopher king. And I once interviewed Allen Iverson. He sent me a thank you note with a P.S.: "I was very disappointed you didn't ask me about nuclear arms control. I was ready."

SI: Reader's Digest *named you "America's best interviewer." Has this interview changed that?*
Russert: It only confirms their wise and prudent decision.

—Richard Deitsch

For more from Tim Russert, go to si.com/siexclusive.

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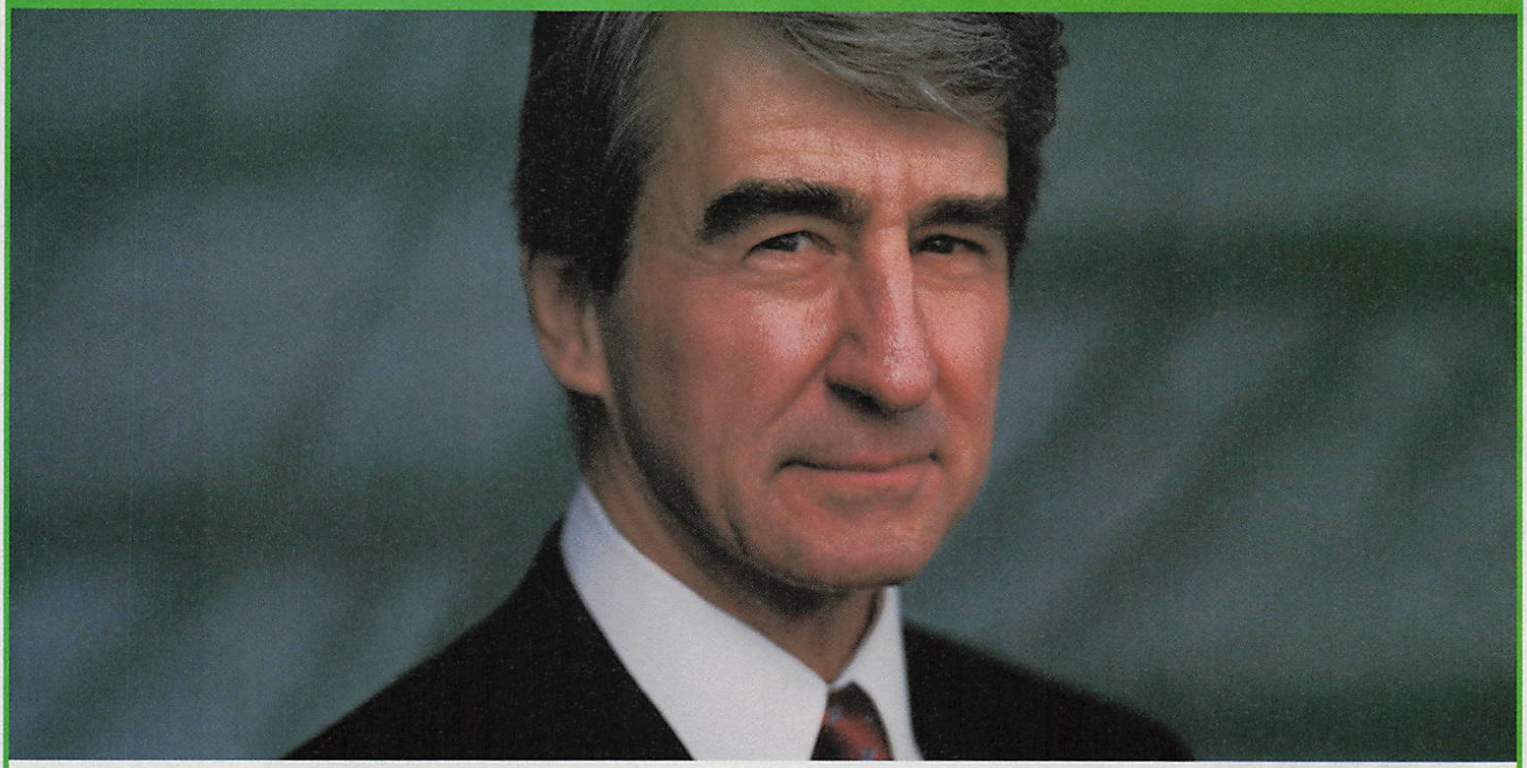
"The Broker to Beat"—*SmartMoney* magazine, August 2003*



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WNBA PREVIEW | BY KELLI ANDERSON

Shock to the System

The first Eastern Conference team to win the championship, Detroit now looks like a dynasty in the making

AS HIS players huddled before practice last week at the Palace in Auburn Hills, Bill Laimbeer stood among them, holding a stuffed yellow garbage bag behind his back. After a few words the Detroit Shock coach pulled out a 12-by-8-foot red-white-and-blue banner that proclaimed the Shock the 2003 WNBA champions. Soon it would hang from the arena rafters alongside the Pistons' title banners from 1988–89 and '89–90—which Laimbeer helped secure as a player. As his charges admired the fruit of their labor, Laimbeer looked around. "Where are the rooks?" he said, and when first-year players Chandi Jones, Isabel Sanchez and Iciss Tillis stepped forward, he handed them the giant swath of nylon. "Fold this up," he directed.

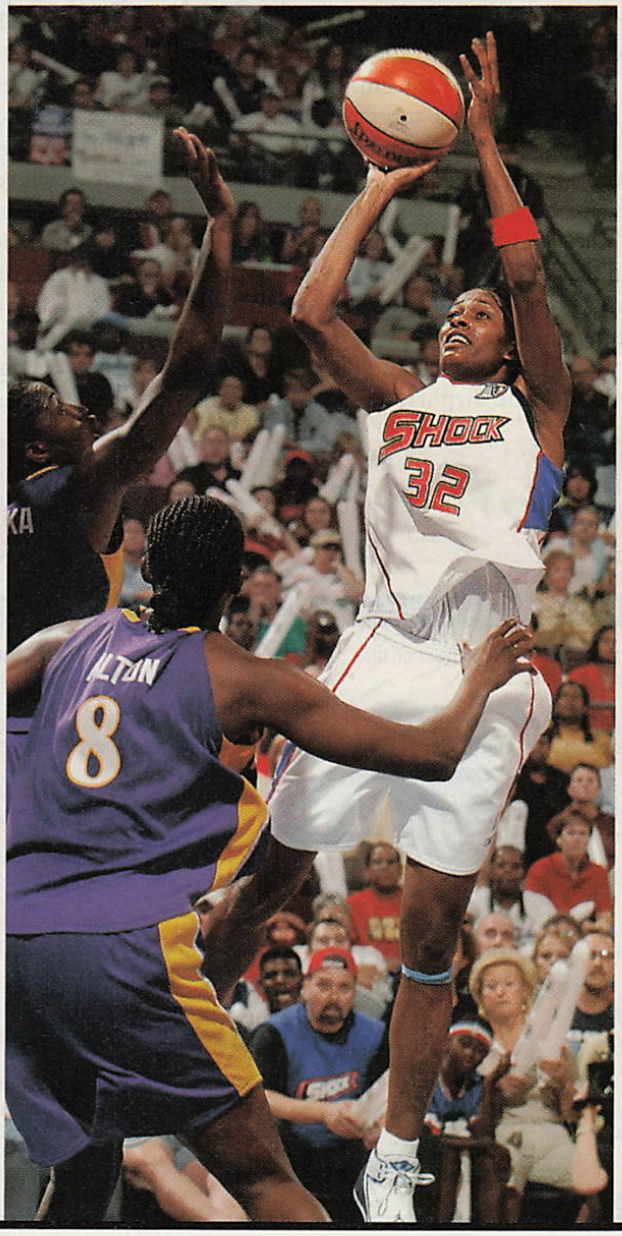
"I wanted them to touch the banner," says Laimbeer, who played 14 seasons in the NBA. "Hopefully they'll get to be part of another one."

If all goes according to Laimbeer's plan and the WNBA's tradition of repeat champions (the Houston Comets won the league's first four titles, the Los Angeles Sparks the next two), Detroit's rookies will stake their claim to a banner by the end of the 2004 season, which starts on Saturday and runs until October, with a month-long break in August for the Olympics. As good as the young Shock team was last September, when it upset L.A. two games to one in the finals, the defending champs should be better this year. All five starters—guards Elaine Powell and Deanna Nolan and the bruising front line of 6' 2" Swin Cash, 6' 3" Cheryl Ford and 6' 5" finals MVP Ruth Riley—return to a team that led the league in scoring, rebounding, three-point shooting and field goal percentage. "Last year we showed what the future of this league looked like," says Laimbeer. "We were big, athletic, strong, physical and young, and we could run, shoot, score and block shots. In Cash, Nolan and Ford we had players who were redefining their positions. We had the whole package, and now that's what everybody else wants."

Accordingly, most other teams used the dispersal draft from the dissolution of the Cleveland Rockers' franchise and an exceptionally deep college draft to get bigger and more athletic. "Detroit is the team to beat, and everyone is trying to match up with them," acknowledges New York Liberty coach Richie Adubato, who for size chose 6' 4" center Ann Wauters in the January dispersal of the Rockers and to match Cash's height and athleticism took 6' 1" small forward Shameka Christon of Arkansas with the fifth pick in the April collegiate draft. "This is going to be a very competitive year because I think every team has improved through the drafts."

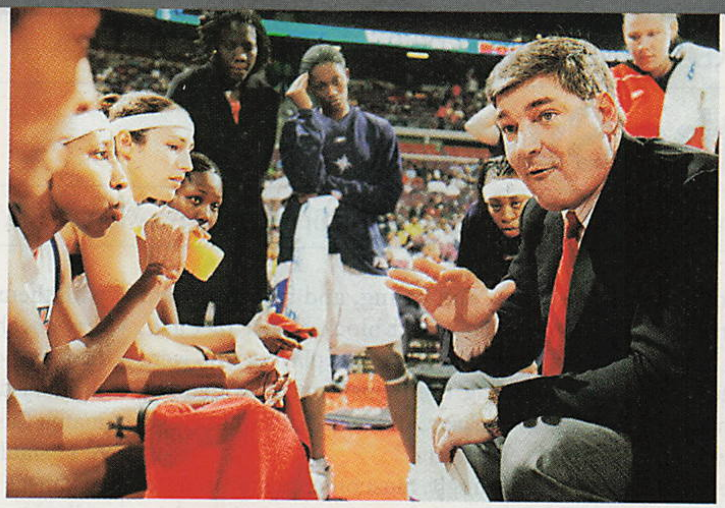
No team has improved enough to overtake the Shock, which despite its lofty finish landed two first-round college picks. Thanks to some astute dealing, Laimbeer, who's also director of player personnel, got exactly what he needed: a versatile backup for Riley in the 6' 5" former Duke All-America Tillis (with the 11th pick, which he had acquired in a trade that sent guard Kedra Holland Corn to Houston) and an athletic combo guard in the 5' 11" Jones of the University of Houston (with the No. 8 pick, which Detroit received as part of a four-player trade with the Phoenix Mercury). According to Laimbeer, Jones so perfectly suited the Shock's needs that he would have chosen her first overall—even ahead of Connecticut superstar Diana Taurasi, who was taken by Phoenix with the No. 1 selection. "There are very few players who can play both the one and the two," says Laimbeer. "Kedra did it for us last year, but Chandi is three inches bigger. We knew she was athletic and talented, but her poise has surprised us. We got her for the future, quite frankly, but she is working her way into our present."

As for Tillis, Laimbeer was not displeased to find that she carries one of the psychological weapons he was noted for as a player: some-



ALLEN EINSTEIN/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

MONEYBALL Cash, a two-time champion at UConn, has instilled a winning attitude in her teammates.



DOCTOR DETROIT On the sidelines Laimbeer is as much psychologist as tactician.

thing to prove. "People have given her a lot of abuse over the years, saying she's too soft, that she played in the shadow of [college player of the year Alana] Beard, so she has a good little chip on her shoulder," says Laimbeer, smiling. "We like that!"

Laimbeer, 47 this week, says his young team is "positioned perfectly for the next four or five years." He's a big part of its future. Having taken over the Shock when it was in the midst of a 9–23 campaign two years ago, he has not had to deal with the personnel clashes or locker room cancers that can disable even the most talented teams, and given the respect his players have for him, he may never have to. He doesn't yell, and he keeps his practices famously short. Sitting courtside before a 90-minute session last week, Tillis said of Laimbeer, "He is very confident in who he is as a person, and he makes you confident because he wants you to shoot the ball, he wants you to do all these things. . . ." Suddenly, Laimbeer was looming over Tillis, pretending to point a microphone in her face. "How did it feel to go 1 for 8 in the last game?" he said with mock curiosity and a barely suppressed grin.

Tillis cracked up. "You see?" she said. "He'll remind you of going 1 for 8. He keeps it in your head, he jokes about it, but at least he says it to your face. What you see is what you get with him."

Cash, the hardworking team captain and a newly minted Olympian, is the perfect floor leader for this coach. A starter on two NCAA title teams at Connecticut, she likes having a target on her back, and she's teaching her teammates to wear it too. "I changed some things with the team at the beginning of last year," says Cash, who's entering her third WNBA season. "The atmosphere here wasn't a winning atmosphere. I learned at Connecticut that there's a way you carry yourself, a way you act, if you're a champion. If we're going to be in the airport, we need to be dressed like we're champions—no sneakers, no holey jeans. Because that becomes habit."

The Shock's popularity is surging around Detroit. The team draws the highest percentage of male fans in the WNBA and has already surpassed last year's ticket sales revenue by 40%. After a practice last week a *Detroit News* photographer showed up to shoot a team photo—with the banner as backdrop—for a sports section wraparound, an honor usually reserved for the Pistons or Red Wings.

"These players have become superstars in Detroit," says Kristin Bernert, the Shock's vice president of operations. "When they walk into a restaurant now, owners want to pick up the tab. People who couldn't name our five starters a year ago now ask about Isabel Sanchez, the rookie from Spain. When the players were presented at halftime of a Pistons game, they got a standing ovation. It's so different from before. This town really does love a winner." Imagine how much it will like a dynasty. □

2004 Predicted Order of Finish

There was plenty of movement in the off-season, but signs point to a Detroit–L.A. finals rematch

EASTERN CONFERENCE

1 **DETROIT SHOCK** With five starters back and two first-round draft picks on the bench, the defending champs will be tough to topple this season.

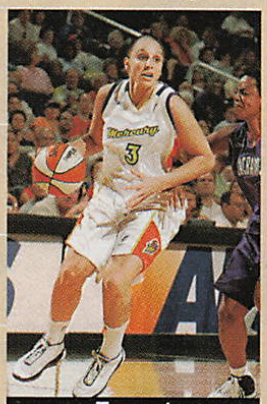
2 **CHARLOTTE STING** The additions of rookie Nicole Powell and vet Olympia Scott-Richardson will provide Charlotte with much-needed youth and rebounding.

3 **NEW YORK LIBERTY** Newcomers Ann Wauters and Shameka Christon will help make up for the loss of starters Teresa Weatherspoon and Tamika Whitmore to free agency.

4 **WASHINGTON MYSTICS** First-round draft pick Alana Beard of Duke, the reigning collegiate player of the year, should help improve a team that went 9–25 last season.

5 **INDIANA FEVER** Tamika Catchings does it all, but she and veteran Natalie Williams will need more support inside against bigger teams.

6 **CONNECTICUT SUN** Trading away Olympic point guard Shannon Johnson to get No. 4 pick Lindsay Whalen will hurt for now but may strengthen the team down the road.



Taurasi

WESTERN CONFERENCE

1 **LOS ANGELES SPARKS** If DeLisha Milton-Jones's knee is functional, the two-time champs will have arguably the best starting five in the league.

2 **SACRAMENTO MONARCHS** Despite picking up Georgetown's Rebekkah Brunson in the draft, they'll likely lose in the playoffs to L.A. for the third time in four seasons.

3 **HOUSTON COMETS** New combo guard Kedra Holland-Corn will nicely complement a frontcourt of Sheryl Swoopes, Tina Thompson and Michelle Snow.

4 **SEATTLE STORM** Veterans Sheri Sam and Betty Lennox should relieve the offensive pressure on Olympian Sue Bird and league MVP Lauren Jackson.

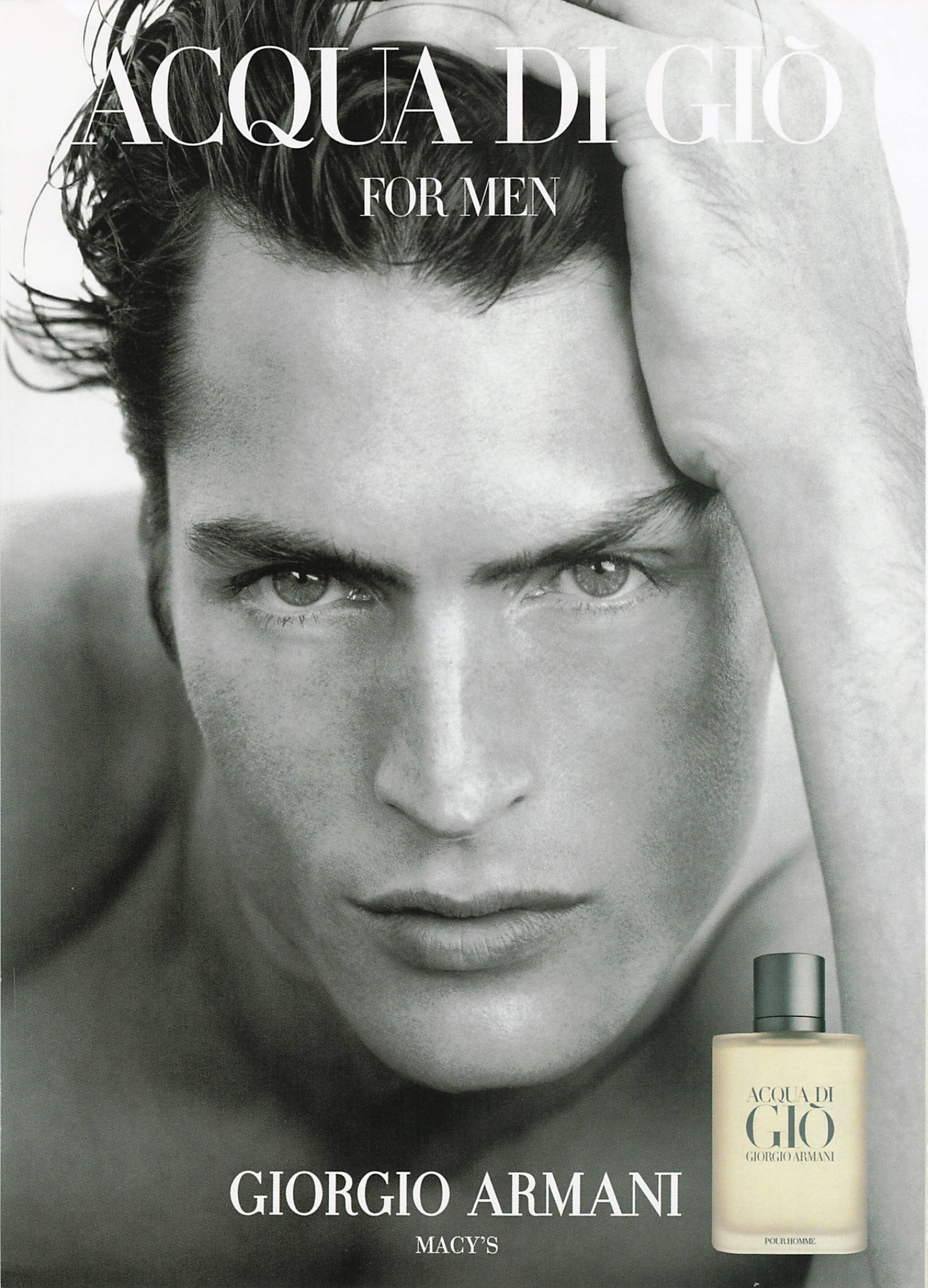
5 **SAN ANTONIO SILVER STARS** Frontliners like 7′ 2″ Margo Dydek and her Polish countrywoman, 6′ 2″ European player of the year Agnieszka Bibrzycka, will keep San Antonio out of the cellar.

6 **MINNESOTA LYNX** With lots of new faces joining the league's oldest player (Teresa Edwards, who is almost 40), the Lynx may take a while to find their identity.

7 **PHOENIX SUN** Top pick Diana Taurasi and young forward Penny Taylor will improve the Mercury but not enough for the team to finish above .500.

FINALS Detroit over Los Angeles in three games

ALLEN EINSTEIN/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); BARRY GOSSAGE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES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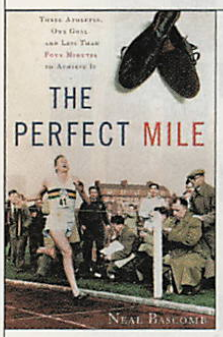
BOOKS | BY KENNY MOORE

Running on Empty

A new account of the race to the first four-minute mile fails to do justice to that epic quest



THE PERFECT MILE
by Neal Bascomb
Houghton Mifflin, $24, 336 pages

WELL BEFORE the first sub-four-minute mile was run 50 years ago this month, three men were capable of punching through that barrier. Had Britain's Roger Bannister not burned himself out racing the 1,500 meters at the Helsinki Olympics, he could have cracked 4:00 two years sooner. Had Australia's John Landy not scorned pacesetters, he'd have done it in December '52 in Melbourne. Had Wes Santee of the University of Kansas not been trapped behind a dawdling pack in the June '53 Compton Mile, his blazing last 700 meters would have taken him under.

Why did the four-minute mile take so long? Because it's harder to lead than to follow. A miler going at a four-minute pace (15 mph) uses about 10% of his energy to part the air. But that air stays parted: A runner drafting on a leader does about 7% less work. Bannister, Landy and Santee all were capable of running sub-four, but none could run it alone. The first to break four minutes would be the first to exploit the 7% solution.

Not that we read any of this in Neal Bascomb's *The Perfect Mile*, a fascinating and frustrating account of the quest. Clearly an able historian, Bascomb has set himself the task of taking us back and letting us judge events and characters from contemporary sources, but it's as if *he* refuses all pacers. He needs to explain a few things.

It needs to be said that Kansas coach Bill Easton failed Santee by making him run a killing college schedule, and that Landy failed himself, albeit nobly, leading every step of try after try, so tiring himself that he continually fell short. Bannister was the first under four because his coach, Franz Stampfl, trained two other near-four-minute milers, giving Bannister a team of windbreaks that, on May 6, 1954, launched him to his historic 3:59.4.

These are great stories, undeserving of imprecise telling. I couldn't put Bascomb's book down, except for the times I threw it across the room. The author relies too much on old newspaper accounts, and his hand on the prose tiller is occasionally unsteady. (Santee's "vulnerability had a limit buttressed with steel.") Bascomb holds up the great August 1954 duel between Landy and Bannister as the titular "perfect mile," but how perfect could it have been given that Santee, who had joined the Marines, was denied leave to run in the event? In a "perfect" mile the Kansan—strong enough to stay with Landy and possessing a better kick than Bannister—would have won.

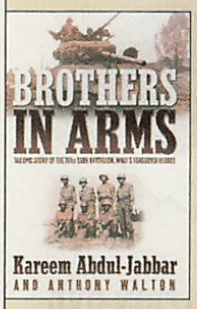
And yet. . . . Such drawbacks are almost forgivable because this was one of sport's great hunts. All three men were exemplary. Landy was the hardest trainer and the most accessible. Bannister was the most gifted, but his dedication to his medical career compromised his running. Santee was horribly mistreated by the AAU regarding eligibility. These were pioneers. They deserve to be understood in depth.

ALMOST PERFECT Santee came up just short of 4:00.

The movie rights to *The Perfect Mile* have been snapped up by two of the producers of *Seabiscuit*. If ever there were a work begging for a movie to be better than the book, this is it. □

Tales of the 761st

An NBA Hall of Famer chronicles a groundbreaking WWII Army unit



BROTHERS IN ARMS
by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anthony Walton
Broadway, $24.95, 302 pages

What inspires a basketball great to take on military history? For Kareem Abdul-Jabbar it was a chance encounter at a 1992 screening of a documentary on the U.S. Army's 761st tank battalion, the first all-black armored unit to fight in World War II. At the film Abdul-Jabbar ran into Leonard (Smitty) Smith, a retired New York City transit cop and family friend. Kareem writes that as a kid, "It never occurred to me that he even had a story." But that night he learned that Smith had served in the 761st. The meeting inspired Abdul-Jabbar to write *Brothers in Arms*, on Smith and his historic unit.

The six-time NBA MVP—whose previous books include *Black Profiles in Courage* and *A Season on the Reservation*—spent years researching the 761st with co-author Anthony Walton. "The biggest challenge," Abdul-Jabbar says, "was how to tell the story without going over ground that had already been covered."

While other books chronicle the unit's role in winning the Battle of the Bulge and in liberating concentration camps, *Brothers in Arms* focuses on the recollections of Smith and comrades William McBurney and Preston McNeil. It details everything from the smell of sewage in the men's segregated barracks, "assailing the men anew each time they came back to their quarters," to the way the cold "turned the skin of the dead the purplish red color of wine."

Now in their 80s, the men of the 761st have attended book signings along with Kareem. Says Abdul-Jabbar, "They're happy to have this story told in a way they could be proud of."

—Melissa Segura

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN (MILE); BETTMANN/CORBIS (SANTEE); BROADWAY BOOKS

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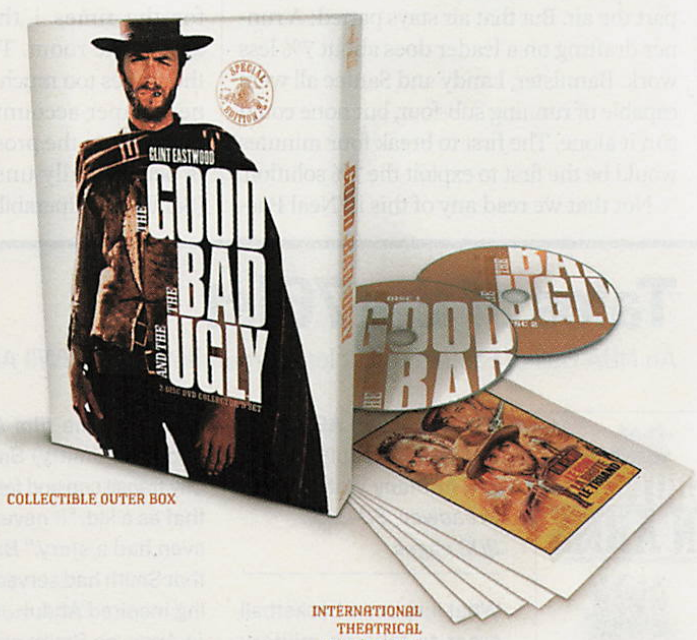
— LOS ANGELES TIMES



COLLECTIBLE OUTER BOX

INTERNATIONAL THEATRICAL MINI-POSTERS

PRESENTING THE COLLECTOR'S EDITION DVD

Clint Eastwood returns with a vengeance in "the best directed movie of all time" (Quentin Tarantino), now featuring a new high-definition transfer with 18 minutes of extra footage and 5.1 Surround sound, and "loaded with a fistful of extras" (*TV Guide*)!

CLINT EASTWOOD in "THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY" Co-starring LEE VAN CLEEF, ALDO GIUFFRE and With MARIO BREGA. Also Starring [illegible] Screenplay by AGE SCARPELLI, LUCIANO VINCENZONI and SERGIO LEONE. Directed by SERGIO LEONE. Music by ENNIO MORRICONE. Produced by ALBERTO GRIMALDI for P.E.A. - Produzioni Europee Associate. Home TECHNICOLOR™ TECHNICOLOR™ UA Not Rated

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HOME ENTERTAINMENT

FOOTBALL | BY FARRELL EVANS

Joining the Family Business

Steelers draft pick Max Starks is following his father—and three uncles, too—into the NFL

WHEN THE Pittsburgh Steelers took Max Starks IV of Florida in the third round of the 2004 draft, they extended a legacy dating back more than two decades. A 6' 7", 359-pound left tackle nicknamed the Undertaker (he worked in his parents' funeral home as a kid), Starks is the fifth member of his family to be drafted by an NFL team. "People come up to me and say, 'I'm glad you're continuing that tradition,' " Starks says. " 'Your father and uncles were great players.' "

But not until five years ago did the 22-year-old Orlando native know he had *any* NFL relatives. On Valentine's Day 1999, Ross Browner, a former defensive end with the Cincinnati Bengals, received a letter from an old girlfriend, Elleanor Starks. In it she informed Browner that he was the father of her 17-year-old son, Max, and enclosed photographs of the boy, who bore a strong resemblance to Ross. "For two people who never knew each other," says Elleanor, "they laughed, walked and talked alike. Ross put some strong genes into that boy."

"I was really surprised that it took so long for me to learn that I had another son," says Browner, who has Rylan, 13, with his wife of 17 years, Shayla Simpson. "That letter from Elleanor was the first time I'd heard from her since April of 1981." (Max was born on Jan. 10, 1982.)

A month after contacting Browner, Elleanor realized she had to tell her son about his biological father before he heard it from someone else. A burgeoning talent at Lake Highland High in Orlando, Max was about to make an unofficial junior-year visit to Southern Cal, where—unknown to him—his uncles Joey and Keith Browner had played; Elleanor feared Max might learn of his connection to the Browners while in L.A. "Max looks just like his uncle Joey," says Elleanor, "so at that point I decided to straighten it all out."

OPPOSITE NUMBER Starks excelled at offensive tackle for the Gators, while his dad was a star on the defensive line.

Father and son finally met in the summer of '99, when Ross picked up Max after a Georgia football camp. "When we saw each other, we hugged and held each other for awhile," says Ross. "I think learning about me helped him answer some questions about his size and all the other things he had going for him."

During that visit, Browner took Max to his home in Atlanta, where he showed him mementos of his playing days. It's no small collection—Browner was a two-time All-America at Notre Dame; the third overall pick in the 1978 draft, he played nine seasons for the Cincinnati Bengals, and in Super Bowl XVI against the San Francisco 49ers he had 10 solo tackles. "I saw everything," says Max. "The national championship ring, the SPORTS ILLUSTRATED covers, the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award."

Football became the common ground upon which father and son could build a relationship. During Max's senior year of high school, he and Browner discussed the merits of schools he was considering (including Notre Dame). Browner also encouraged Max to study tape of his former teammate, Hall of Fame left tackle Anthony Muñoz. The study paid off—Max was a three-year starter at Florida, and as a senior last season he was not beaten for a sack by a defensive end.

Max, who remains close to Max III, the father he grew up with (he and Elleanor divorced in 1990), calls his relationship with Browner a work in progress. Browner says his priority is to develop a strong parental bond with Max, but he doesn't hesitate to offer football advice. "I've already learned a lot from Ross about how to be an NFL player," says Max. "It's nice having someone who knows exactly what the man across the line is trying to do." □

NFL Bloodlines

Max Starks's father, Ross Browner, and three of Ross's five brothers played in the NFL. Here's a look at the Browner family football tree.

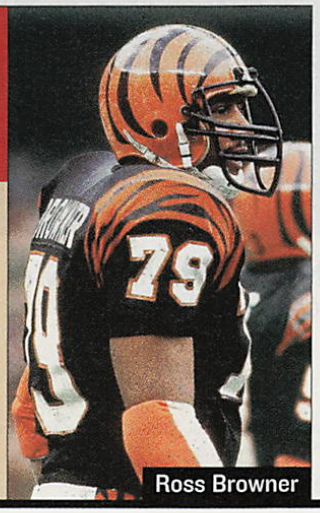
ROSS A standout defensive end at Notre Dame, he was picked eighth in the 1978 draft by the Cincinnati Bengals and played nine seasons.

JIMMIE A teammate of Ross's at Notre Dame, he was a 12th-round pick of Cincinnati in the '79 draft and played two seasons at safety with the Bengals.

JOEY After a stellar collegiate career as a defensive back at USC, he was a first-round pick of the Vikings in '83; named to the Pro Bowl six times in 10 seasons.

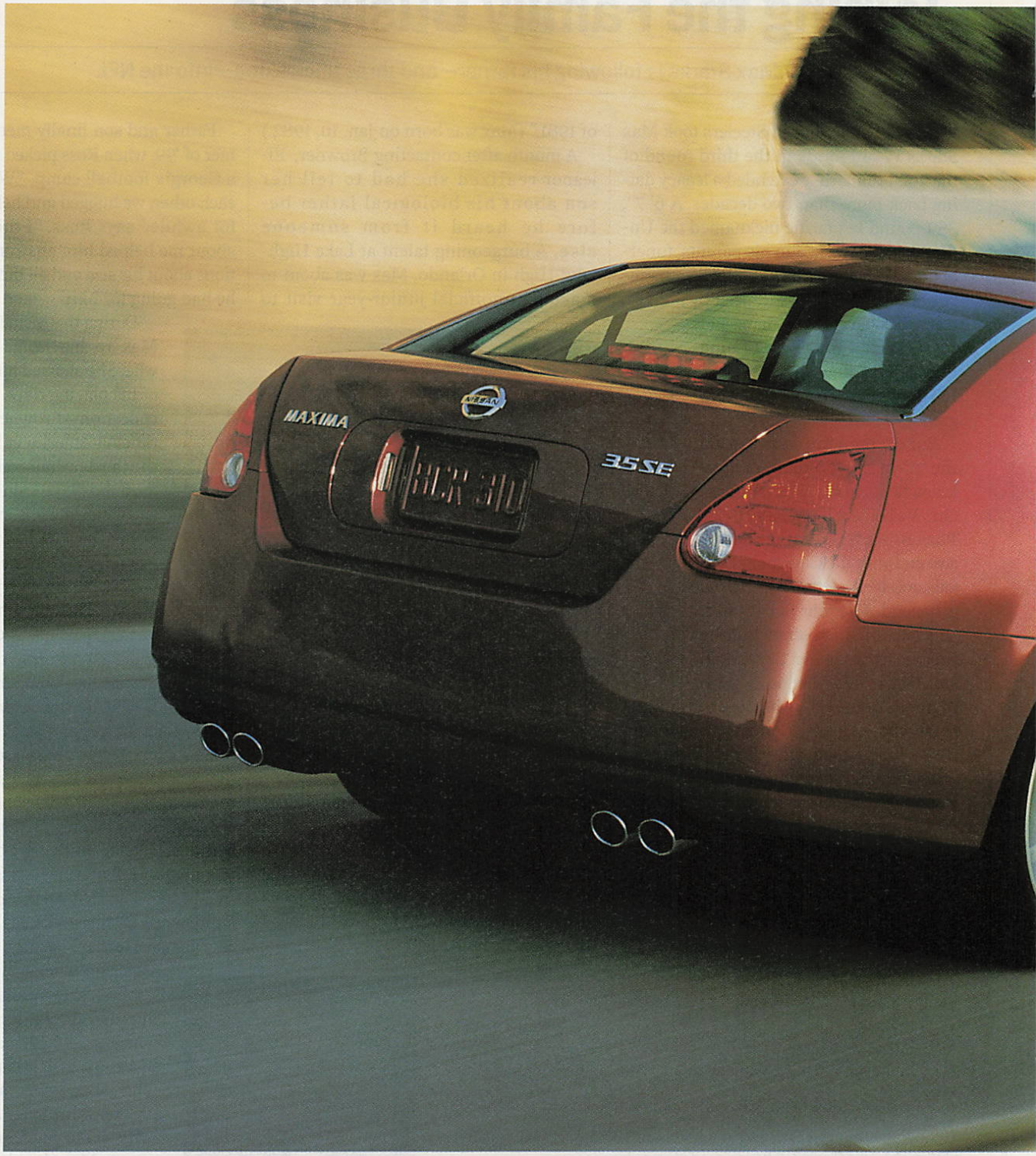
KEITH A second-round pick of the Buccaneers in '84, out of Southern Cal, he played five NFL seasons at outside linebacker, three of them with Tampa Bay.

JULIA The Browner family matriarch was the 1987 NFL Mother of the Year.



Ross Browner

ROB TRINGALI/SPORTSCHROME USA (TOP); JOHN IACONO



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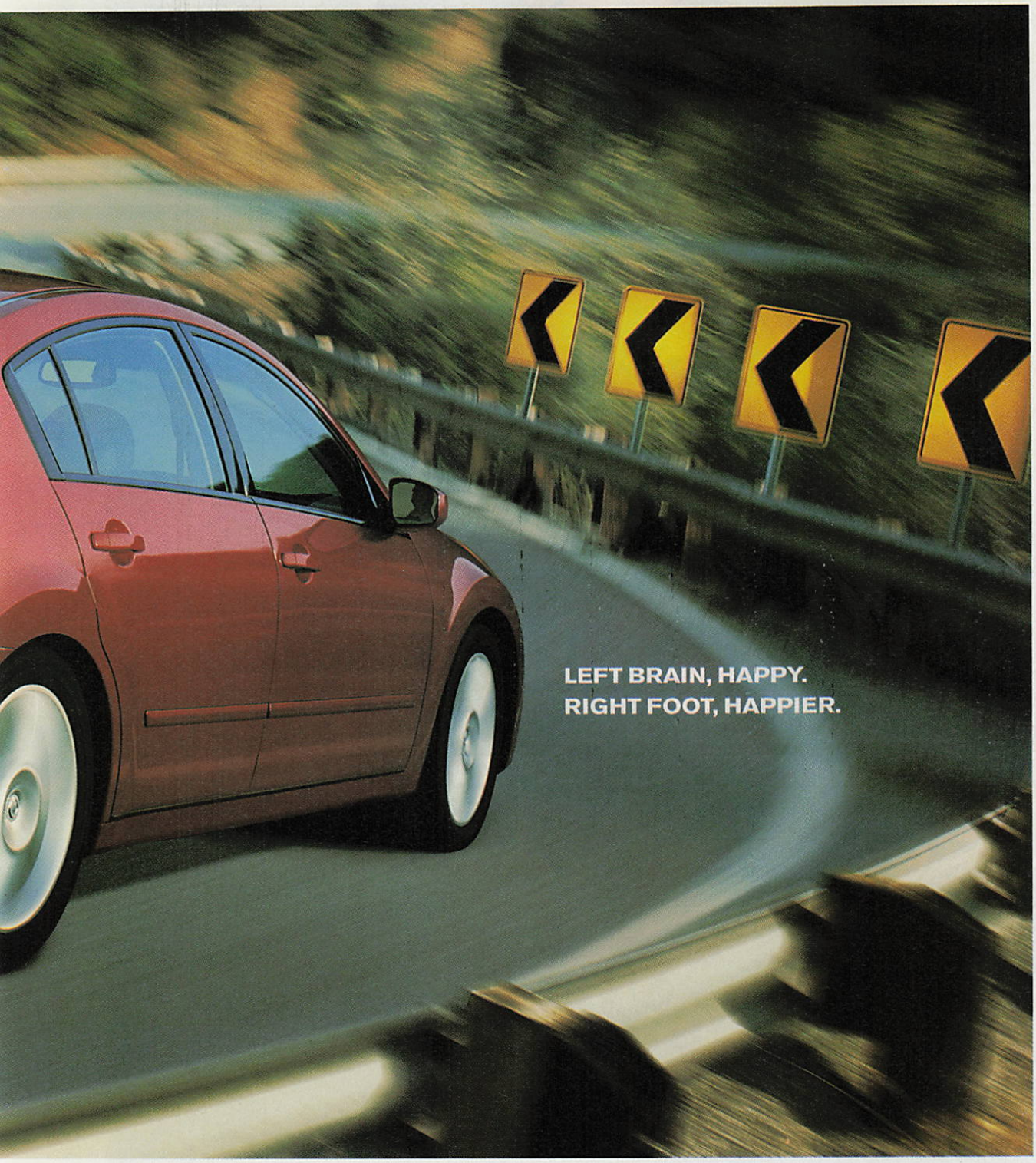
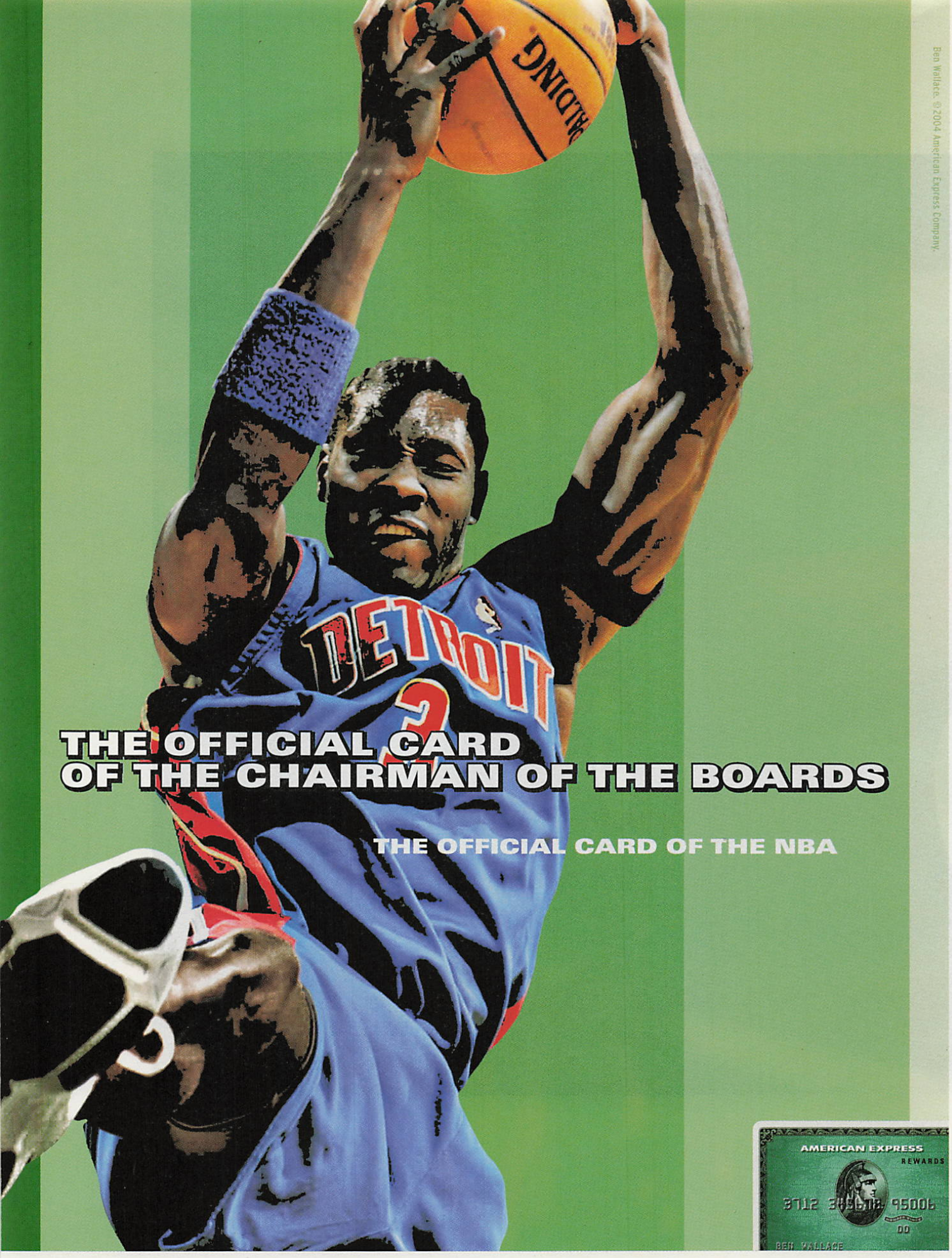


NISSAN

SHIFT_ performance



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SPORTS BEAT

PICTURE THIS No, it's not *The Three Stooges Go to Canada*; it happens to be a scene from the NHL playoffs. With linesman Scott Driscoll doing an excellent Moe, Philadelphia's Branko Radivojevic *(left)* and Tampa Bay's Andre Roy had a meeting of the minds during the third period of Game 2 of the Eastern Conference finals. Sadly, this was the only late drama as the Flyers routed the Lightning 6–2.

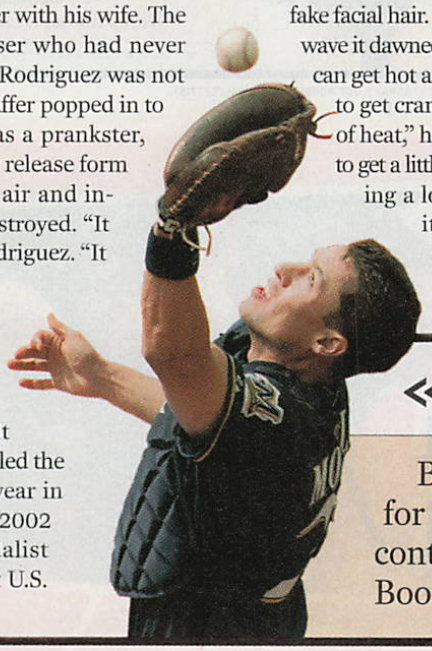
PERENNIAL PARTY girl **Tara Reid** likes to play the field with guys who play on fields. After being seen canoodling in 2002 with Patriots quarterback **Tom Brady** (just before the Pats lost two of their last three to miss the playoffs) and hanging out with Giants tight end **Jeremy Shockey** last year (before the Giants went 4–12), Reid, 28, has rushed into the arms of Ravens quarterback **Kyle Boller**, 22. The *American Pie* actress has been partying with the former Cal star in L.A. since last month. As for Reid's penchant for guy pals in pads, her mother, Donna, a Giants fan, recently told the *Record* of Bergen County, N.J., "[*E! True Hollywood Story*] asked me if Tara dating Tom Brady had made the Patriots lose that year. . . . We'll have Tara go through the entire NFL so the Giants will win the Super Bowl next."

Kyle's catch

■ Hollywood prankster **Ashton Kutcher** has set **the Rock**'s trailer on fire and repossessed everything in **Justin Timberlake**'s home, but when he heckled **Alex Rodriguez** for his MTV show *Punk'd*, he went too far. In the midst of A-Rod's contract negotiations during the off-season, Kutcher had a waiter pose as a die-hard Red Sox fan at an L.A. restaurant where Rodriguez, 28, was eating dinner with his wife. The waiter called A-Rod a loser who had never been on a winning team. Rodriguez was not amused. When a show staffer popped in to reveal that the waiter was a prankster, A-Rod refused to sign the release form to allow the segment to air and insisted that the tape be destroyed. "It was a good idea," said Rodriguez. "It was just bad timing."

■ Last Thursday, Roots, the Canadian company that so stylishly outfitted the U.S. team at the Salt Lake City Olympics, unveiled the gear the U.S. team will wear in Athens this summer. As 2002 figure skating gold medalist **Sarah Hughes** and current U.S. softball team members **Jennie Finch** and **Lisa Fernandez** milled about the NBC Experience Store in New York City, where the unveiling took place, **Chevy Chase**, who turned tripping into an art form during the first two seasons of *Saturday Night Live*, reflected on his own athletic career. "Soccer was very important in my life," Chase told SI. "It taught me how to fall."

■ Damon's Disciples will have to toss their fake beards next week when Red Sox centerfielder **Johnny Damon** shaves for charity. *The Passion of the Christ* 'do, which the 30-year-old has sported all season, has spawned a hirsute following that shows up at Fenway in wigs and fake facial hair. But during a recent heat wave it dawned on Damon that a beard can get hot and sweaty. "I don't want to get cramps on the field and die of heat," he said. "And it's starting to get a little sloppy. You start drinking a lot of water, and half of it stays in your beard." When Gillette offered Damon $15,000 to shave with one of its new razors, he agreed to do it and donate the money to children's reading and tutoring programs at Boston's public library. While Damon's chin will stay clean for the summer, he plans to grow his beard back when the weather cools.



THIS WEEK'S SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Sammy Sosa injured his back sneezing.

■ What happens when people stop being polite and start working for **Jon Bon Jovi**? We'll find out during the 15th season of MTV's *The Real World*. The show will be set in Philadelphia, and the seven housemates, who moved in on April 30, will work for Bon Jovi's Arena Football League team, the Philadelphia Soul. They're going to have to live on a prayer—they're not being paid for their work in the team's community relations department.

« THEY SAID IT CHAD MOELLER

Brewers catcher, upon receiving a motorcycle for hitting for the cycle: "At this point it's in my contract that I can't ride one, and after Aaron Boone, I'm trying to follow the contract closely."

BOB ROSATO (PICTURE THIS); KATHY WILLENS/AP PHOTO (MOELLER); KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM (REID)

THE WEEK AHEAD

WHAT TO WATCH AND WATCH FOR BY JULIA MORRILL

FRIDAY 21

U.S. OLYMPIC WRESTLING TRIALS ESPN2 11 PM > Keep an eye on tiny-but-tough Tina George: The 5-foot, 121-pound U.S. Army Specialist is a two-time national champ. • **DODGERS AT BRAVES TBS 7:30 PM** > With a bullpen that's lost just once, L.A. has the NL's best record.

SATURDAY 22

HOME DEPOT INVITATIONAL NBC 4 PM > Marion Jones is hot off wins in the 100 meters and the long jump at the Jamaica International Invitational. • **MERCURY AT SUN ABC 4 PM** Diana Taurasi returns to Connecticut—where she led UConn to three straight national titles—as Phoenix's rookie phenom.

SUNDAY 23

***THE WILLIAMS SISTERS: E! TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY* E! 9 PM** > An only-in-America tale precedes a uniquely English one. The Williamses' rags-to-riches story, replete with the controlling father, is followed by *It's Good to be Posh and Becks*, which gives a glimpse into the lives of David and Victoria Beckham.

MONDAY 24

***CLASSIC DRIVE THRU*: ASTROS AT CUBS (MAY 6, 1998) ESPN CLASSIC 9 PM** > In one of the most dominant performances of all time, 20-year-old Cubs rookie Kerry Wood used his 100-mile-an-hour heat and knee-buckling curve to equal the major league record of 20 K's in a 2–0, one-hit win.

TUESDAY 25

NCAA WOMEN'S TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS ESPN2 3 PM Top-ranked Stanford—with the nation's No. 1 doubles team of Lauren Barnikow and Erin Burdette—is after its 13th title. **STANLEY CUP FINALS, GAME 1 ESPN 8 PM** > It took seven weeks, but the 16-team playoff field has finally been whittled to two.

WEDNESDAY 26

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SOCCER FINAL: AS MONACO VS. PORTO ESPN2 2:30 PM > Two upstarts vie for European supremacy. Porto is led by crafty Portuguese playmaker Deco and goalkeeper Vítor Baía, who will look to shut down Monaco's high-scoring Spanish forward, Fernando Morientes.

THURSDAY 27

WOMEN'S COLLEGE WORLD SERIES, GAME 1 ESPN 12 PM > Arizona and UCLA are No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, but that's no surprise. In the 21-year history of the women's CWS, they've combined to win it 16 times. ***CELEBRITY POKER SHOWDOWN* BRAVO 9 PM** > In tonight's season premiere, Jerome Bettis and Mena Suvari ante up.

TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (WRESTLER); KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/AP (WILLIAMS SISTERS); CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES (TROPHY); JOE ROBBINS/ICON SMI (BETTIS); W. CODY/CORBIS (CARDS); ANTONIO SIMOES/EPA (GOALKEEPER); STEPHEN GREEN (WOOD); BARRY GOSSAGE/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (TAURASI)

UNDER REVIEW

►**SMART COVERAGE** A year ago, when *Seabiscuit* was looming on the summer schedule, many people in the racing business were predicting that the movie would be a powerful promotional tool. Attendance didn't skyrocket immediately, but the *Seabiscuit* effect may be just now taking hold. TV ratings for NBC's broadcast of the Kentucky Derby were up 22%. And last Saturday, with Smarty Jones emerging as a Seabiscuit-ish people's champ, the Preakness scored an overnight Nielsen of 7.2, a 29% increase over last year's race. Alas, what the audience saw wasn't necessarily NBC's finest hour and a half: After Imperialism lost a shoe, causing a delay of the race, reporters Kenny Rice and Bob Neumeier asked trainer Kristin Mulhall the same question—"What happened?"—within six minutes of each other. Still, there were a few fine touches, including a moving feature on Robert Camac, Smarty's first trainer, who was murdered by his stepson in 2001. Whatever the network is planning for the June 5 Belmont, another strong rating is certain. —S.P.

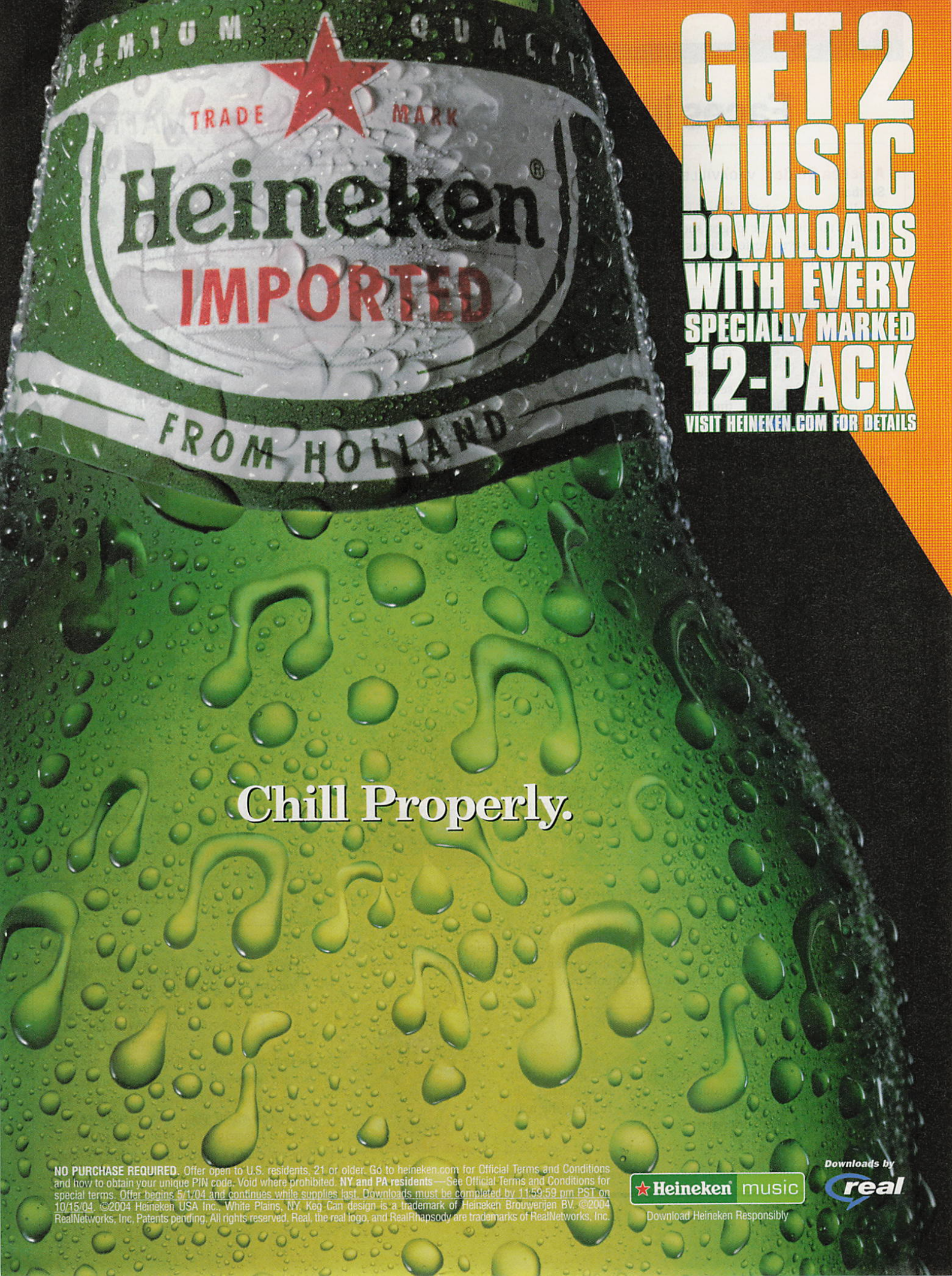
SI.com | THE POLL POSITION

This week SI ranks the seven best Game 7s in NBA history (page 58). Which do you think was the best?

- ○ **1957: Celtics 125, St. Louis Hawks 123**
- ○ **1965: Celtics 110, 76ers 109**
- ○ **1969: Celtics 108, Lakers 106**
- ○ **1970: Knicks 113, Lakers 99**
- ○ **1986: Bucks 113, 76ers 112**
- ○ **1988: Celtics 118, Hawks 116**
- ○ **1990: Trail Blazers 108, Spurs 105**

Vote on **SI.com/basketball**
Watch for the results here next week.

THE FRENCH OPEN
L-R: Andy Roddick, Justine Henin-Hardenne, Roger Federer, Serena Williams
MAY 24 - JUNE 4 ESPN ESPN 2
ESPN
THE GRAND SLAM NETWORK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Faces in the Crowd

Anjelica Selden, VACAVILLE, CALIF.
Softball
Anjelica, a senior righthander at Vanden High, pitched 10 consecutive no-hitters, the longest such streak in the nation this year. She also had seven perfect games and is batting .439. She has an 85–7 career record and has allowed four earned runs in four years.

Bill Haas, GREER, S.C.
Golf
Haas, a senior at Wake Forest and the two-time Atlantic Coast Conference player of the year, won the Ben Hogan Award, presented to the nation's top college golfer. He is the son of eight-time PGA Tour winner Jay Haas.

Ashley Harmeling, NORTH READING, MASS.
Lacrosse
Harmeling, a junior attacker at Amherst and the New England Small College Athletic Conference's leader in goals, assists and points, was named NESCAC player of the year. This was her first season of college lacrosse. She was also player of the year in soccer.

Kyle Jenkins, KENT, WASH.
Track and Field
Kyle, a senior triple jumper at Thomas Jefferson High, broke a 27-year-old state record with a leap of 50' 2" at the Pasco Invitational. As a football player he led the South Puget Sound League in receptions with 57.

Emilie Rymer, MEDINA, OHIO
Gymnastics
Emilie, a sophomore at Medina High, won the overall title and gold medals in the vault, uneven parallel bars and floor exercise at the girls' state tournament. She was named gymnast of the year by the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* and the *Akron Beacon Journal.*

Pete Steinberg, PHILADELPHIA
Rugby
Steinberg, 33, a leadership development consultant, coached Temple to the Division II women's collegiate title. Two hours later he coached the Penn State women's team to the Division I title, its third national championship.

Raasin McIntosh, HOUSTON
Track and Field
McIntosh, a senior at Texas, became the first Longhorn to win three consecutive Big 12 outdoor 400-meter-hurdles titles. She also finished third in the 100-meter hurdles, helping the team win the women's outdoor conference title.

SI.com *To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to* **SI.com/faces.**

TRIVIAL MATTERS

BY DAVID SABINO

North Stars

Canada's Cup By making the NHL's Western Conference finals, the Flames were on the verge of reaching the Stanley Cup finals for the second time in their history. Which was the last Canadian team to reach the finals?

a. Canadiens **c. Flames**
b. Canucks **d. Oilers**

Distant Replay Before this season the last playoff series the Flames won was the 1989 Stanley Cup finals. Two players from that team were active in this season's playoffs. Who are they? (Hint: They were teammates once again this year.)

This Week's Matchup Goalie Miikka Kiprusoff, who began his career with the Sharks, has been the driving force behind the Flames' playoff run. Can you match these other goaltenders who have had recent postseason success with the team for which they began their careers?

1. Robert Esche **a. Hartford Whalers**
2. J.S. Giguère **b. Pittsburgh Penguins**
3. Nikolai Khabibulin **c. Phoenix Coyotes**
4. Patrick Lalime **d. Winnipeg Jets**

Call to Order Rank these current and former Flames based on career postseason points scored for Calgary.

a. Jarome Iginla **c. Lanny McDonald**
b. Al MacInnis **d. Joe Mullen**

ANSWERS
CANADA'S CUP: b. The Canucks were the last Canadian team to make it to the Stanley Cup finals; they lost to the Rangers in 1994. The Canadiens were the last to win the Cup, beating the Kings in '93.
DISTANT REPLAY: Joe Nieuwendyk and Gary Roberts, who play for the Maple Leafs, were teammates on the 1988–89 Flames.
THIS WEEK'S MATCHUP: 1. c; 2. a; 3. d; 4. b
CALL TO ORDER: b. MacInnis (102 points in 95 games); d. Mullen (55 points in 61 games); c. McDonald (47 points in 72 games); a. Iginla (17 points in 19 games)

FROM TOP: MIKE MCCOY/THE DAILY REPUBLIC; KEN BENNETT/WAKE FOREST; DEREK FOWLES PHOTOGRAPHY; STRODE-MCGOWAN PHOTOGRAPHY; JOHN H. REID III; JIM LUZZI; SUSAN ALLEN SIGMON

There are people who shoulda, coulda, woulda.
And there are people who are glad they did.

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KICK START

New Mexico has become a **youth-soccer** hotbed, thanks in part to changes that have opened the game to more Hispanic immigrants

BY GEORGE DOHRMANN

WHEN OFELIA LIRA immigrated from Torreon in northern Mexico to Las Cruces, N.Mex., last July, she believed she was doing right for her two sons, Ivan, 11, and Gaspar, 9. But as she watched Gaspar play soccer on a windy desert night a few weeks ago, the outline of the Organ Mountains off to the east, the single mom admitted she might have made a mistake. ¶ "It has been hard to find work, and I have been thinking about going home," she said in Spanish, looking down at Ivan, who was seated at her feet. "But I cannot leave because of the opportunity they have here to play soccer. They love it, and I can't take it from them."

Immigrants like Lira have long brought soccer-loving children across the Rio Grande (legally and illegally), part of the reason New

 PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT BECK

UPWARDLY MOBILE Players on southern New Mexico clubs like the Strikers (in black) are filling more state all-star slots.

Mexico, and particularly the southern part of the state, where Las Cruces is located, has become a hotbed of talented youth-league players. One has only to look across the 23 packed fields on the Santa Ana Pueblo in Bernalillo outside Albuquerque—site of this month's State Cup—to appreciate the sport's popularity throughout the Land of Enchantment. But more discerning eyes, such as the pair belonging to the Liras' coach, Linda Lara, look across the fields in Bernalillo and see the results of a grassroots movement that only recently succeeded in bringing change to the soccer culture here.

Even as New Mexico's Hispanic population grew to more than 42% as of 2000, the highest proportion of any state, the top level of youth soccer was inaccessible to many of the best Hispanic players. The selection process for the state's Olympic Development Program (ODP)—US Youth Soccer's tool for identifying potential national-team players and a pipeline for college recruiters—was dominated by coaches from big club teams in and around Albuquerque, New Mexico's largest city. Participation fees and the cost of traveling and staying in Albuquerque (the only place practices were held) prevented many of those Hispanic players who were picked from participating. "It was like ODP was only for the rich," says Lara.

TOE-TO-TOE Boys and girls learn the game together in a Las Cruces under-seven league.

But reform in the New Mexico Youth Soccer Association (NMYSA), and the dedication of people like Lara, has greatly altered the state's soccer scene. A number of Hispanic players, many of them poor immigrants, are now excelling in the ODP and helping their teams win state high school and club titles. "The people on the board of directors [of the Albuquerque-based NMYSA] fought tooth and nail against some of the changes," says Bob Bigney, the association's former director of coaching who's now a club coach in Las Cruces. Adds Mark Paffett, the NMYSA president, "There are some people who don't want to give up the power. Albuquerque had always been the big dog and made all the rules."

The big dog in Las Cruces is Lara, though she hardly looks the part. The 48-year-old elementary school counselor stands just over five-feet tall and never played soccer. She started a team called Strikers FC when the first of her four sons began playing 20 years ago. She now manages five teams at varying age levels—a total of 78 boys and girls, a third of whom each year are recent immigrants.

"Linda is like a fairy godmother," Paffett says. "She puts up thousands of dollars a year to help these kids play, to keep them in school. She is allowing them the opportunity to better their lives."

Lara doesn't ask if a family can afford registration or tournament fees or travel costs; she only requires that her players make practice on time, stay in school and earn solid grades. She rarely loses a player at a time when the high school dropout rate for Hispanic immigrants in New Mexico is more than 40%. "Linda is the support system for a lot of the families," says Scott McClanahan, whose son, Ryan, plays for Lara's under-17 team.

At a recent practice Lara was more into bragging about her players than talking about her generosity. She ticked off the college prospects of each player. Patrick Jurney, 17, started playing with the Strikers FC but moved to Albuquerque when he was eight years old because his mother changed jobs. For the past couple of years he has driven more than three hours to Las Cruces for practice most weeks. "I tried playing for a club in Albuquerque, but no one cared for each other," Jurney says. "Playing for Linda and the Strikers is more meaningful."

The meaning isn't lost on Edgar and Noel Castillo, brothers who have greatly benefited from Lara's generosity. "These two were born here but made the transition to English after they joined the Strikers," she says proudly. They have developed into two of the state's best players. Edgar traveled to Chile last month with the District IV all-star team and has been invited to Adidas's Elite Soccer Program, a collection of the top 150 youth players in the nation.

SI.com *For more about sports in New Mexico and the other 49 states, go to* **si.com/50.**

Change came to New Mexico soccer when Bigney arrived at the NMYSA from Virginia in 1999. "You'd see some of Linda's kids and ask why they were not in ODP," he recalls. Bigney did away with tryout fees and made it possible for any coach—not just those running the big clubs in Albuquerque—to recommend a player for the program. He also took steps to draw attention to players outside Albuquerque, holding ODP practices in Las Cruces, even bringing a national-team coach to scout players there. Strikers FC players were soon starring in the ODP.

"Linda puts up thousands of dollars a year to help these kids play, to keep them in school. She is allowing them the opportunity to better their lives."

CARING COACH Lara, the fairy godmother of youth soccer in Las Cruces, manages 78 players on five teams.

"The first year I tried out for the state team [in 1998], there were all guys from Albuquerque and two from Las Cruces," says David Lara, 17, Linda's youngest son. "This year there were only four from Albuquerque, and the rest were from the south."

Despite the success of Strikers FC, Paffett believes the biggest indicator of the changing landscape of youth soccer in New Mexico was the Class 5-A state high school title won by the girls' team at Las Cruces High in 2003, the first by a school from the southern half of the state. The team was made up largely of players from the lone under-15 girls' club team in the Las Cruces region, the Jornada Sharks. Like Lara's Strikers, the Sharks reflect the diversity of Las Cruces, with nine Hispanics, five U.S.-born whites, two Slavic immigrants and one Native American. Like the Strikers, many of the Sharks are "scholarship" players, meaning that the club's coach, Ivan Strnad, pays their fees or enlists other parents to help cover costs.

Among Strnad's players last season was Taylor Lytle, who qualified for the national pool in the girls' under-15 division. She and Edgar Castillo might not have reached the national level had it not been for Wayne Suggs, coaching administrator for Las Cruces's High Noon Soccer League. He raised $6,000 to help pay travel and registration fees for Las Cruces players in the ODP, which the NMYSA matched, although not without dissent from some board members and parents in Albuquerque, Paffett says. He believes their protests were grounded in the fact that southern kids are winning spots on state teams in place of their own children. "It's been a battle," Suggs says.

John Madding, NMYSA director of coaching and education, says, "There *was* some resistance—as there is any time you ask the majority to make sacrifices so a minority can participate. Albuquerque is where most youth soccer players are, but when they saw how much better the state teams were with Linda's players, they became more accepting."

Paffett is now trying to reach out to New Mexico's other substantial minority group, Native Americans. An initiative spearheaded by Madding and buoyed by casino money (there are 15 Native American–run casinos in the state), is building fields and training coaches on the pueblos. "The goal is simple: Give more kids the opportunity to play," Paffett says.

Ivan Lira, while watching his brother in action at the High Noon Soccer Complex, overheard his mother say she couldn't take him from the Strikers; he looked up at her, smiling, and nodded his approval. He grabbed a ball from a U-16 Strikers player and dribbled off, just a typical New Mexico kid playing the game he loves. □

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INDICATIONS AND USAGE CRESTOR is indicated: 1. as an adjunct to diet to reduce elevated total-C, LDL-C, ApoB, nonHDL-C, and TG levels and to increase HDL-C in patients with primary hypercholesterolemia (heterozygous familial and nonfamilial) and mixed dyslipidemia (Fredrickson Type IIa and IIb); 2. as an adjunct to diet for the treatment of patients with elevated serum TG levels (Fredrickson Type IV); 3. to reduce LDL-C, total-C, and ApoB in patients with homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia as an adjunct to other lipid-lowering treatments (e.g., LDL apheresis) or if such treatments are unavailable. **CONTRAINDICATIONS** CRESTOR is contraindicated in patients with a known hypersensitivity to any component of this product. Rosuvastatin is contraindicated in patients with active liver disease or with unexplained persistent elevations of serum transaminases (see WARNINGS, Liver Enzymes). **Pregnancy and Lactation** Atherosclerosis is a chronic process and discontinuation of lipid-lowering drugs during pregnancy should have little impact on the outcome of long-term therapy of primary hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol and other products of cholesterol biosynthesis are essential components for fetal development (including synthesis of steroids and cell membranes). Since HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors decrease cholesterol synthesis and possibly the synthesis of other biologically active substances derived from cholesterol, they may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. Therefore, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are contraindicated during pregnancy and in nursing mothers. ROSUVASTATIN SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED TO WOMEN OF CHILDBEARING AGE ONLY WHEN SUCH PATIENTS ARE HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO CONCEIVE AND HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS. If the patient becomes pregnant while taking this drug, therapy should be discontinued immediately and the patient apprised of the potential hazard to the fetus. **WARNINGS Liver Enzymes** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. The incidence of persistent elevations (>3 times the upper limit of normal [ULN] occurring on 2 or more consecutive occasions) in serum transaminases in fixed dose studies was 0.4, 0, 0, and 0.1% in patients who received rosuvastatin 5, 10, 20, and 40 mg, respectively. In most cases, the elevations were transient and resolved or improved on continued therapy or after a brief interruption in therapy. There were two cases of jaundice, for which a relationship to rosuvastatin therapy could not be determined, which resolved after discontinuation of therapy. There were no cases of liver failure or irreversible liver disease in these trials. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed before and at 12 weeks following both the initiation of therapy and any elevation of dose, and periodically (e.g., semiannually) thereafter.** Liver enzyme changes generally occur in the first 3 months of treatment with rosuvastatin. Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored until the abnormalities have resolved. Should an increase in ALT or AST of >3 times ULN persist, reduction of dose or withdrawal of rosuvastatin is recommended. Rosuvastatin should be used with caution in patients who consume substantial quantities of alcohol and/or have a history of liver disease (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Hepatic Insufficiency). Active liver disease or unexplained persistent transaminase elevations are contraindications to the use of rosuvastatin (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). **Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to myoglobinuria have been reported with rosuvastatin and with other drugs in this class.** Uncomplicated myalgia has been reported in rosuvastatin-treated patients (see ADVERSE REACTIONS). Creatine kinase (CK) elevations (>10 times upper limit of normal) occurred in 0.2% to 0.4% of patients taking rosuvastatin at doses of up to 40 mg in clinical studies. Treatment-related myopathy, defined as muscle aches or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in CK values >10 times upper limit of normal, was reported in up to 0.1% of patients taking rosuvastatin doses of up to 40 mg in clinical studies. Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis were seen with higher than recommended doses (80 mg) of rosuvastatin in clinical trials. Factors that may predispose patients to myopathy with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors include advanced age (≥65 years), hypothyroidism, and renal insufficiency. The incidence of myopathy increased at doses of rosuvastatin above the recommended dosage range. Consequently: 1. Rosuvastatin should be prescribed with caution in patients with predisposing factors for myopathy, such as, renal impairment (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION), advanced age, and hypothyroidism. 2. Patients should be advised to promptly report unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. Rosuvastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. 3. The risk of myopathy during treatment with rosuvastatin may be increased with concurrent administration of other lipid-lowering therapies or cyclosporine, (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Drug Interactions, PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions, and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **The benefit of further alterations in lipid levels by the combined use of rosuvastatin with fibrates or niacin should be carefully weighed against the potential risks of this combination. Combination therapy with rosuvastatin and gemfibrozil should generally be avoided. (See DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions).** 4. **The risk of myopathy during treatment with rosuvastatin may be increased in circumstances which increase rosuvastatin drug levels (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Race and Renal Insufficiency, and PRECAUTIONS, General).** 5. **Rosuvastatin therapy should also be temporarily withheld in any patient with an acute, serious condition suggestive of myopathy or predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis (e.g., sepsis, hypotension, major surgery, trauma, severe metabolic, endocrine, and electrolyte disorders, or uncontrolled seizures). PRECAUTIONS General** Before instituting therapy with rosuvastatin, an attempt should be made to control hypercholesterolemia with appropriate diet and exercise, weight reduction in obese patients, and treatment of underlying medical problems (see INDICATIONS AND USAGE). Administration of rosuvastatin 20 mg to patients with severe renal impairment (CL_{cr} <30 mL/min/1.73 m^2) resulted in a 3-fold increase in plasma concentrations of rosuvastatin compared with healthy volunteers (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). Pharmacokinetic studies show an approximate 2-fold elevation in median exposure in Japanese subjects residing in Japan and in Chinese subjects residing in Singapore compared with Caucasians residing in North America and Europe. The contribution of environmental and genetic factors to the difference observed has not been determined. However, these increases should be considered when making rosuvastatin dosing decisions for patients of Japanese and Chinese ancestry. (See WARNINGS, Myopathy/ Rhabdomyolysis; CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Race.) **Information for Patients** Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. When taking rosuvastatin with an aluminum and magnesium hydroxide combination antacid, the antacid should be taken at least 2 hours after rosuvastatin administration (see CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Drug Interactions). **Laboratory Tests** In the rosuvastatin clinical trial program, dipstick-positive proteinuria and microscopic hematuria were observed among rosuvastatin-treated patients, predominantly in patients dosed above the recommended dose range (i.e., 80 mg). However, this finding was more frequent in patients taking rosuvastatin 40 mg, when compared to lower doses of rosuvastatin or comparator statins, though it was generally transient and was not associated with worsening renal function. Although the clinical significance of this finding is unknown, a dose reduction should be considered for patients on rosuvastatin 40 mg therapy with unexplained persistent proteinuria during routine urinalysis testing. **Drug Interactions Cyclosporine:** When rosuvastatin 10 mg was coadministered with cyclosporine in cardiac transplant patients, rosuvastatin mean C_{max} and mean AUC were increased 11-fold and 7-fold, respectively, compared with healthy volunteers. These increases are considered to be clinically significant and require special consideration in the dosing of rosuvastatin to patients taking concomitant cyclosporine (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, and DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **Warfarin:** Coadministration of rosuvastatin to patients on stable warfarin therapy resulted in clinically significant rises in INR (>4, baseline 2-3). In patients taking coumarin anti-coagulants and rosuvastatin concomitantly, INR should be determined before starting rosuvastatin and frequently enough during early therapy to ensure that no significant alteration of INR occurs. Once a stable INR time has been documented, INR can be monitored at the intervals usually recommended for patients on coumarin anticoagulants. If the dose of rosuvastatin is changed, the same procedure should be repeated. Rosuvastatin therapy has not been associated with bleeding or with changes in INR in patients not taking anti-coagulants. **Gemfibrozil:** Coadministration of a single rosuvastatin dose to healthy volunteers on gemfibrozil (600 mg twice daily) resulted in a 2.2- and 1.9-fold, respectively, increase in mean C_{max} and mean AUC of rosuvastatin (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). **Endocrine Function** Although clinical studies have shown that rosuvastatin alone does not reduce basal plasma cortisol concentration or impair adrenal reserve, caution should be exercised if any HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor or other agent used to lower cholesterol levels is administered concomitantly with drugs that may decrease the levels or activity of endogenous steroid hormones such as ketoconazole, spironolactone, and cimetidine. **CNS Toxicity** CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhages, edema, and mononuclear cell infiltration of perivascular spaces, have been observed in dogs treated with several other members of this drug class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced dose-dependent optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in dogs, at a dose that produced plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose. Edema, hemorrhage, and partial necrosis in the interstitium of the choroid plexus was observed in a female dog sacrificed moribund at day 24 at 90 mg/kg/day by oral gavage (systemic exposures 100 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Corneal opacity was seen in dogs treated for 52 weeks at 6 mg/kg/day by oral gavage (systemic exposures 20 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Cataracts were seen in dogs treated for 12 weeks by oral gavage at 30 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures 60 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). Retinal dysplasia and retinal loss were seen in dogs treated for 4 weeks by oral gavage at 90 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures 100 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC). Doses ≤30 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures ≤60 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons) following treatment up to one year, did not reveal retinal findings. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility** In a 104-week carcinogenicity study in rats at dose levels of 2, 20, 60, or 80 mg/kg/day by oral gavage, the incidence of uterine stromal polyps was significantly increased in females at 80 mg/kg/day at systemic exposure 20 times the human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC. Increased incidence of polyps was not seen at lower doses. In a 107-week carcinogenicity study in mice given 10, 60, 200 mg/kg/day by oral gavage, an increased incidence of hepatocellular adenoma/carcinoma was observed at 200 mg/kg/day at systemic exposures 20 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC. An increased incidence of hepatocellular tumors was not seen at lower doses. Rosuvastatin was not mutagenic or clastogenic with or without metabolic activation in the Ames test with *Salmonella typhimurium* and *Escherichia coli*, the mouse lymphoma assay, and the chromosomal aberration assay in Chinese hamster lung cells. Rosuvastatin was negative in the *in vivo* mouse micronucleus test. In rat fertility studies with oral gavage doses of 5, 15, 50 mg/kg/day, males were treated for 9 weeks prior to and throughout mating and females were treated 2 weeks prior to mating and throughout mating until gestation day 7. No adverse effect on fertility was observed at 50 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures up to 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). In testicles of dogs treated with rosuvastatin at 30 mg/kg/day for one month, spermatidic giant cells were seen. Spermatidic giant cells were observed in monkeys after 6-month treatment at 30 mg/kg/day in addition to vacuolation of seminiferous tubular epithelium. Exposures in the dog were 20 times and in the monkey 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons. Similar findings have been seen with other drugs in this class. **Pregnancy** ***Pregnancy Category X*** See CONTRAINDICATIONS. Rosuvastatin may cause fetal harm when administered to a pregnant woman. Rosuvastatin is contraindicated in women who are or may become pregnant. Safety in pregnant women has not been established. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies of rosuvastatin in pregnant women. Rosuvastatin crosses the placenta and is found in fetal tissue and amniotic fluid at 3% and 20%, respectively, of the maternal plasma concentration following a single 25 mg/kg oral gavage dose on gestation day 16 in rats. A higher fetal tissue distribution (25% maternal plasma concentration) was observed in rabbits after a single oral gavage dose of 1 mg/kg on gestation day 18. If this drug is administered to a woman with reproductive potential, the patient should be apprised of the potential hazard to a fetus. In female rats given oral gavage doses of 5, 15, 50 mg/kg/day rosuvastatin before mating and continuing through day 7 postcoitus results in decreased fetal body weight (female pups) and delayed ossification at the high dose (systemic exposures 10 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC comparisons). In pregnant rats given oral gavage doses of 2, 20, 50 mg/kg/day from gestation day 7 through lactation day 21 (weaning), decreased pup survival occurred in groups given 50 mg/kg/day, systemic exposures ≥12 times human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons. In pregnant rabbits given oral gavage doses of 0.3, 1, 3 mg/kg/day from gestation day 6 to lactation day 18 (weaning), exposures equivalent to human exposure at 40 mg/day based on body surface area comparisons, decreased fetal viability and maternal mortality was observed. Rosuvastatin was not teratogenic in rats at ≤25 mg/kg/day or in rabbits ≤3 mg/kg/day (systemic exposures equivalent to human exposure at 40 mg/day based on AUC or body surface comparison, respectively). **Nursing Mothers** It is not known whether rosuvastatin is excreted in human milk. Studies in lactating rats have demonstrated that rosuvastatin is secreted into breast milk at levels 3 times higher than that obtained in the plasma following oral gavage dosing. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk and because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants from rosuvastatin, a decision should be made whether to discontinue nursing or administration of rosuvastatin taking into account the importance of the drug to the lactating woman. **Pediatric Use** The safety and effectiveness in pediatric patients have not been established. Treatment experience with rosuvastatin in a pediatric population is limited to 8 patients with homozygous FH. None of these patients was below 8 years of age. **Geriatric Use** Of the 10,275 patients in clinical studies with rosuvastatin, 3,159 (31%) were 65 years and older, and 698 (6.8%) were 75 years and older. The overall frequency of adverse events and types of adverse events were similar in patients above and below 65 years of age. (See WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis.) The efficacy of rosuvastatin in the geriatric population (≥65 years of age) was comparable to the efficacy observed in the non-elderly. **ADVERSE REACTIONS** Rosuvastatin is generally well tolerated. Adverse reactions have usually been mild and transient. In clinical studies of 10,275 patients, 3.7% were discontinued due to adverse experiences attributable to rosuvastatin. The most frequent adverse events thought to be related to rosuvastatin were myalgia, constipation, asthenia, abdominal pain, and nausea. **Clinical Adverse Experiences** Adverse experiences, regardless of causality assessment, reported in ≥2% of patients in placebo-controlled clinical studies of rosuvastatin are shown in Table 1; discontinuations due to adverse events in these studies of up to 12 weeks duration occurred in 3% of patients on rosuvastatin and 5% on placebo.

Table 1. Adverse Events in Placebo-Controlled Studies

Adverse event	Rosuvastatin N=744	Placebo N=382
Pharyngitis	9.0	7.6
Headache	5.5	5.0
Diarrhea	3.4	2.9
Dyspepsia	3.4	3.1
Nausea	3.4	3.1
Myalgia	2.8	1.3
Asthenia	2.7	2.6
Back pain	2.6	2.4
Flu syndrome	2.3	1.8
Urinary tract infection	2.3	1.6
Rhinitis	2.2	2.1
Sinusitis	2.0	1.8

In addition, the following adverse events were reported, regardless of causality assessment, in ≥1% of 10,275 patients treated with rosuvastatin in clinical studies. The events in *italics* occurred in ≥2% of these patients. **Body as a Whole:** *Abdominal pain, accidental injury, chest pain, infection, pain,* pelvic pain, and neck pain. **Cardiovascular System:** *Hypertension,* angina pectoris, vasodilatation, and palpitation. **Digestive System:** *Constipation, gastroenteritis,* vomiting, flatulence, periodontal abscess, and gastritis. **Endocrine:** Diabetes mellitus. **Hemic and Lymphatic System:** Anemia and ecchymosis. **Metabolic and Nutritional Disorders:** *Peripheral edema.* **Musculoskeletal System:** *Arthritis, arthralgia,* and pathological fracture. **Nervous System:** *Dizziness, insomnia, hypertonia, paresthesia, depression,* anxiety, vertigo, and neuralgia. **Respiratory System:** *Bronchitis, cough increased,* dyspnea, pneumonia, and asthma. **Skin and Appendages:** *Rash* and pruritus. **Laboratory Abnormalities:** In the rosuvastatin clinical trial program, dipstick-positive proteinuria and microscopic hematuria were observed among rosuvastatin-treated patients, predominantly in patients dosed above the recommended dose range (i.e., 80 mg). However, this finding was more frequent in patients taking rosuvastatin 40 mg, when compared to lower doses of rosuvastatin or comparator statins, though it was generally transient and was not associated with worsening renal function. (See PRECAUTIONS, Laboratory Tests.) Other abnormal laboratory values reported were elevated creatinine phosphokinase, transaminases, hyperglycemia, glutamyl transpeptidase, alkaline phosphatase, bilirubin, and thyroid function abnormalities. Other adverse events reported less frequently than 1% in the rosuvastatin clinical study program, regardless of causality assessment, included arrhythmia, hepatitis, hypersensitivity reactions (i.e., face edema, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, vesiculobullous rash, urticaria, and angioedema), kidney failure, syncope, myasthenia, myositis, pancreatitis, photosensitivity reaction, myopathy, and rhabdomyolysis. **OVERDOSAGE** There is no specific treatment in the event of overdose. In the event of overdose, the patient should be treated symptomatically and supportive measures instituted as required. Hemodialysis does not significantly enhance clearance of rosuvastatin. **DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION** The patient should be placed on a standard cholesterol-lowering diet before receiving CRESTOR and should continue on this diet during treatment. CRESTOR can be administered as a single dose at any time of day, with or without food. **Hypercholesterolemia (Heterozygous Familial and Nonfamilial) and Mixed Dyslipidemia (Fredrickson Type IIa and IIb)** The dose range for CRESTOR is 5 to 40 mg once daily. Therapy with CRESTOR should be individualized according to goal of therapy and response. The usual recommended starting dose of CRESTOR is 10 mg once daily. Initiation of therapy with 5 mg once daily may be considered for patients requiring less aggressive LDL-C reductions or who have predisposing factors for myopathy (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis). For patients with marked hypercholesterolemia (LDL-C > 190 mg/dL) and aggressive lipid targets, a 20-mg starting dose may be considered. The 40-mg dose of CRESTOR should be reserved for those patients who have not achieved goal LDL-C at 20 mg (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/ Rhabdomyolysis). After initiation and/or upon titration of CRESTOR, lipid levels should be analyzed within 2 to 4 weeks and dosage adjusted accordingly. **Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia** The recommended starting dose of CRESTOR is 20 mg once daily in patients with homozygous FH. The maximum recommended daily dose is 40 mg. CRESTOR should be used in these patients as an adjunct to other lipid-lowering treatments (e.g., LDL apheresis) or if such treatments are unavailable. Response to therapy should be estimated from pre-apheresis LDL-C levels. **Dosage in Patients Taking Cyclosporine** In patients taking cyclosporine, therapy should be limited to CRESTOR 5 mg once daily (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/Rhabdomyolysis, and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions). **Concomitant Lipid-Lowering Therapy** The effect of CRESTOR on LDL-C and total-C may be enhanced when used in combination with a bile acid binding resin. If CRESTOR is used in combination with gemfibrozil, the dose of CRESTOR should be limited to 10 mg once daily (see WARNINGS, Myopathy/ Rhabdomyolysis, and PRECAUTIONS, Drug Interactions). **Dosage in Patients With Renal Insufficiency** No modification of dosage is necessary for patients with mild to moderate renal insufficiency. For patients with severe renal impairment (CL_{cr} <30 mL/min/1.73 m^2) not on hemodialysis, dosing of CRESTOR should be started at 5 mg once daily and not to exceed 10 mg once daily (see PRECAUTIONS, General, and CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY, Special Populations, Renal Insufficiency).

NOTE: This summary provides important information about CRESTOR. For more information, please ask your doctor or health care professional about the full Prescribing Information and discuss it with them.

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NFL PIPELINE

A summer in a New Mexico oil field taught the Bears star to stick to football

BY BRIAN URLACHER

IT HAPPENS to me everywhere that my life as a linebacker for the Chicago Bears takes me—in restaurants, in airports, once even at an NFL rookie photo shoot. "Where are you from?" someone will ask. "New Mexico," I'll say, and then I watch their mouths drop open and their eyes widen. "Wow," they'll say. "Mexico. What's that like, man?" Or, "I didn't know they played football in Mexico." And don't forget, "Wow! You speak such good English. You don't even have an accent." ¶ That's not the only misconception people have about my home state. They think it's just desert, and I have to explain that there are mountains too. Cold weather and warm weather. Skiing in the winter and golf pretty much year-round—everything you could want within a four- to five-hour drive. New Mexico is the best-kept secret in the United States. And yes, it is a state.

I go back at least once every summer, when I host a kids' football camp in Albuquerque, at the University of New Mexico, where I played in college. The camp is always the best part of my offseason—I get in there with the kids, throw the football around and put them through some of the drills that players have to run at the NFL combine. Sometimes I will let a kid beat me in a drill (even though I hate to) because all the other kids get so excited when that happens. I have to admit that I lost once when I was trying to win, though—this 12-year-old beat me straight up. He was a little guy with quick feet; I had no chance. At the end of the drill, I acted as if I had slipped, but the kids went berserk and jumped on me. I never heard the end of it for the rest of the camp.

I'm always a sucker for the kids who have the least athletic ability but work the hardest. The kids who bust their butts. Those are the kids I really fall for, and I'll spend as much time with them as possible. Maybe I take to them because they remind me of myself. When I was that age, I was kind of chubby, not very tall and not the best player, but I always worked hard.

The other great thing about the camp is that I get a chance to hang out with some of my former high school coaches from Lovington. They help coach the kids and help me run the drills, and after camp is over for the day, we'll go to dinner, go to the water park or play golf. We're *all* kids that week.

Jaime Quinones, who was the defensive backs coach while I was at Lovington High, always comes to the camp. (I played safety in both high school and college.) He pretty much molded me into the player I am: He always made sure my brother Casey and I were in the weight room by 5:30 in the morning—during the offseason. If we didn't show up, he'd call our house.

Those early-morning workouts were good training for football and for life outside the chalk lines. The summer before I went to college, I worked in the oil fields near Lovington. I had to get to work by 6 a.m. and work until 7 p.m. every night, wearing a long-sleeved shirt so I wouldn't get sunburned in the 110° heat. We put oil pipes in the ground, so there was always oil running all over and you never knew what would happen—maybe even an explosion.

My father worked in the oil fields, and I know I could have easily ended up there too. Lovington is a town with four stoplights and a bunch of oil rigs, and when you grow up with that life, you don't know anything different. I thought that was what life was supposed to be—hardworking folks out in brutal heat every day.

One summer of working in the oil fields was all it took to show me that I didn't want to do that anymore. The other important things I learned growing up in New Mexico stick with me today—how to work hard, how to trust the guy next to you on the line (pipeline or yard line), how to cuss in Spanish and, yes, even a little English. □

Former Lovington High and University of New Mexico standout Brian Urlacher is a four-time Pro Bowl linebacker.

ILLUSTRATION BY JOE CIARDIELLO

THE POLL

New Mexicans weigh in on sports*

Favorite major league baseball team:
Arizona Diamondbacks...12%
Los Angeles Dodgers...10%
New York Yankees....9%

Favorite NFL team:
Dallas Cowboys.....22%
Denver Broncos.....15%
Green Bay Packers...8%
San Francisco 49ers...8%

Favorite NBA team:
Los Angeles Lakers...17%
Chicago Bulls.....8%

Favorite NHL team:
Colorado Avalanche...14%

Favorite pro team:
Dallas Cowboys.....18%
Denver Broncos.....12%

Favorite announcer:
John Madden.....28%
Terry Bradshaw.....8%

Enthuse-o-meter

On a scale of 1 to 100, how would you rate your state's enthusiasm for sports, relative to other states'?

Rank: 39th of first 44 states polled

Greatest athlete who ever lived in or played for a team in your state:
Brian Urlacher.....49%
Luc Longley.....7%
Michael Cooper.....6%
Tommy McDonald.....4%

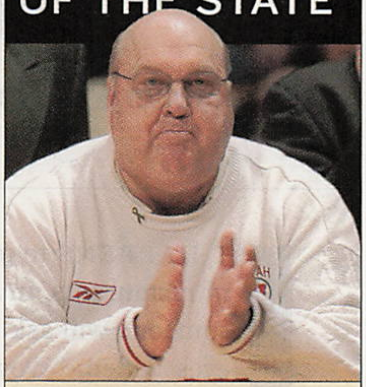
State's biggest rivalry:
New Mexico–New Mexico State...79%

More a fan of college or pro sports?
Pro.....62%
College.....14%

Favorite sport to play:
Billiards.....17%
Hiking.....12%
Swimming.....12%
Baseball/softball.....11%
Fishing.....11%

Favorite sports to watch on TV†:
Football.....83%
Winter Olympics.....47%
Summer Olympics...40%
Auto racing.....36%

ENEMY OF THE STATE



Rick Majerus.....24%
Dave Bliss.....12%
Bob Knight.....11%

Majerus's success against New Mexico as the basketball coach at Utah got him his second Enemy title. (Wyoming also picked him.) Most hated opponents: BYU (25%), UTEP (17%) and the University of Utah (14%).

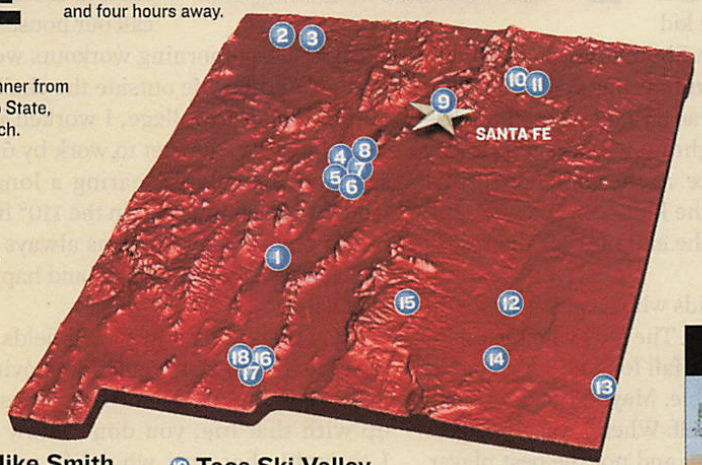
*Harris Interactive poll, conducted online, of 400 New Mexico residents who identified themselves as sports fans. Margin of error +/–5.
†Multiple responses allowed.

WHO & WHERE

1 Elfego Baca Golf Shoot
Golfers tee off from the top of Socorro Peak and aim for the tournament's one hole, which is 2,550 feet below and four hours away.

2 Kirtland Central High
The Lady Broncos have won 16 state girls' basketball championships, the third most in the nation in that sport.

3 Connie Mack World Series
For the past 40 years the best U.S. and Puerto Rican teams in Mack ball (for 16- to 18-year-olds) have gathered in Farmington for their annual tournament.



4 Johnny Tapia
The five-time bantamweight and featherweight champion was taught to box as a child by his grandfather in Albuquerque.

5 Jordan Adams
The former Minnesota Lynx center led New Mexico to its first Sweet 16, in 2003.

6 Greg Brown
The 5' 7" guard from Albuquerque was named the best senior in the country under 6 feet at New Mexico in 1994.

7 The Intersection
Four Corners could also refer to the intersection of Avenida Cesar Chavez and University Boulevard in Albuquerque. One corner has the University of New Mexico's football stadium, another has the Pit, and a third has the Triple A park. What's on the fourth corner? Parking.

HOT SPOT

8 Notah Begay III
The Albuquerque native has four victories on the PGA Tour.

9 Toby Roybal
Santa Fe High's gym is named for this alumnus—the first University of New Mexico basketball player to have his number retired.

10 Taos Ski Valley
The resort has a base elevation of 9,207 feet and is one of the West's top ski destinations.

11 Shovel Racing
The world championships—in which competitors slide down a snowy hillside at up to 60 mph while sitting on shovels—are held annually in Angel Fire.

12 Mike Smith
The Hall of Fame jockey and Roswell native won Eclipse Awards as the nation's top rider in 1993 and '94.

13 Rob Evans
The Arizona State basketball coach is a Hobbs High and New Mexico State graduate.

14 Steve Jones
The Artesia-born PGA Tour golfer won the 1996 U.S. Open.

15 All American Futurity
The world's richest quarter horse race is held annually at the Ruidoso Downs.

16 Las Cruces
The former hangout of Billy the Kid gets 350 sunny days a year and is the state's SI Sportstown for having the best community sports programs.

17 Charley Johnson
The former NFL quarterback heads the chemical engineering department at his alma mater, New Mexico State, in Las Cruces.

18 Rich Beem
The 2002 PGA Championship winner from Las Cruces played at New Mexico State, where his father, Larry, is the coach.

SI.com | To read an SI Flashback story about New Mexico State football's woeful history, vote for the best NFL player born in the Land of Enchantment or submit your own Lobos or Aggies sports memory, go to si.com/50.

DAVID MERRILL/ICON SMI (MAJERUS); JAKE SCHOELLKOPF (INTERSECTION); MAP ILLUSTRATION BY JOE ZEFF

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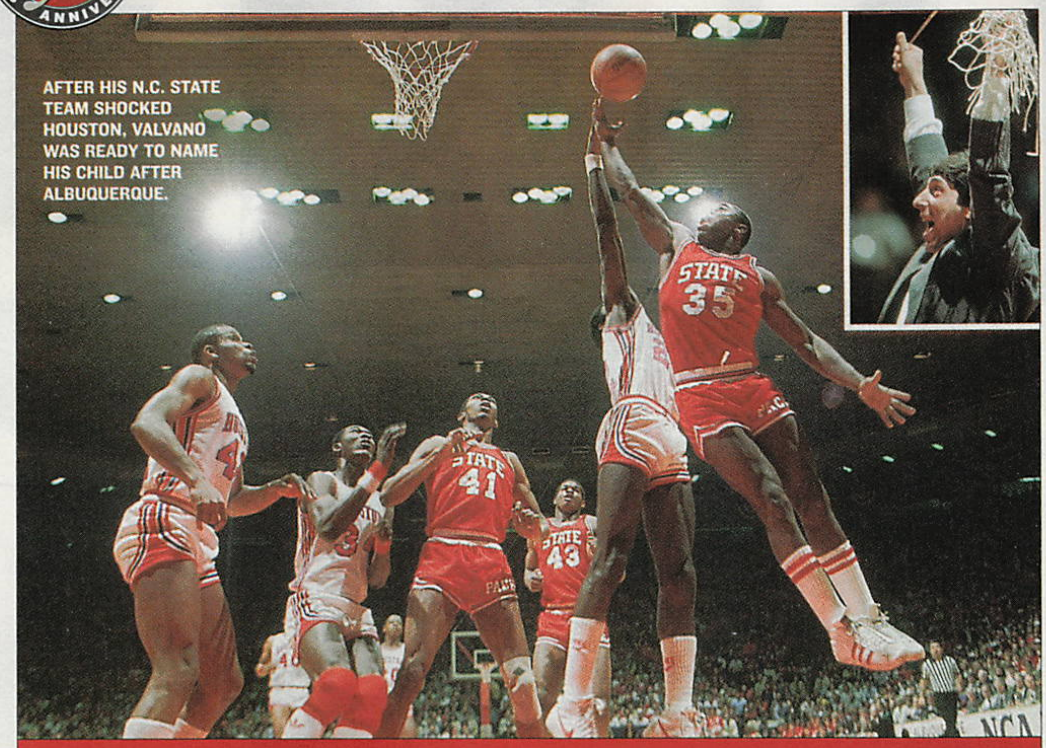


AFTER HIS N.C. STATE TEAM SHOCKED HOUSTON, VALVANO WAS READY TO NAME HIS CHILD AFTER ALBUQUERQUE.

GREATEST MOMENT

The Final Four at the Pit in 1983 was one of the most memorable sports events ever. North Carolina State upset Houston in the championship game 54–52 on a dunk by Lorenzo Charles with one second left. Afterward coach Jim Valvano said, "Albuquerque is the greatest city the Lord ever made. My wife is going to be pregnant—she doesn't know this yet—and I'm going to name the kid Al B. Querque."

NUMBERS

2 PATs kicked by New Mexico's Katie Hnida in a win over Texas State–San Marcos last Aug. 30 to become the first woman to score in a Division I-A football game.

27.96 2002–03 scoring average of New Mexico guard Ruben Douglas, the first Lobo to lead the nation in scoring.

204 Rushing-yards record in a Super Bowl, set by Redskins back Timmy Smith of Hobbs in 1988.

775 Career wins for New Mexico State basketball coach Lou Henson, the second-winningest active coach in Division I.

623 Points the Lobos' ski team scored in winning the 2004 NCAA title, the first national championship for any New Mexico college team.

MEMORABLE QUOTE

"Altitude is never a factor because the game is played inside."

—**TCU BASKETBALL COACH BILLY TUBBS**, AFTER HIS TEAM GREW FATIGUED WHILE RUNNING A FULL-COURT PRESS AGAINST NEW MEXICO AT THE MILE-HIGH PIT IN ALBUQUERQUE IN 1997

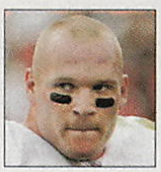
ALLTIME BEST

For New Mexico's top 50 homegrown sports figures, go to SI.com/50

Ralph Kiner, *Baseball player*
For seven straight years the Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder led the National League (or shared the lead) in home runs. The Santa Rita native and Hall of Famer twice hit 50-plus homers. He is in his 43rd year as a New York Mets broadcaster.

Nancy Lopez, *Golfer*
The LPGA Hall of Famer from Roswell won the 1969 state women's amateur title at age 12. As a tour newcomer in 1978, she got the first nine of her 48 career victories and was rookie of the year, player of the year and the Vare Trophy winner.

Al Unser Sr., *Auto racer*
The Albuquerque native drove to victory in the Indy 500 in 1970, '71, '78 and '87. His record-tying fourth win came just days before he turned 48 and made him the event's oldest winner. His brother Bobby won three Indys, and son Al Jr. won two.



Brian Urlacher, *Football player*
The former University of New Mexico star from Lovington has made the Pro Bowl in each of his four years with the Chicago Bears. In 2002 the middle linebacker broke the team record for tackles in a season, set by Dick Butkus in 1972.

Kathy Whitworth, *Golfer*
Her 88 pro victories between 1962 and '85 are the most by any golfer, male or female. The two-time state amateur champ from Jal was the first female player to pocket $1 million in earnings and was a seven-time LPGA player of the year.

Bob Foster, *Boxer*
With his overpowering left hook, the Albuquerque native dominated the light heavyweight ranks in the late 1960s and early '70s. He won his first title in 1968 by handing Dick Tiger his first knockout loss. Foster successfully defended his belt a division-record 14 times.

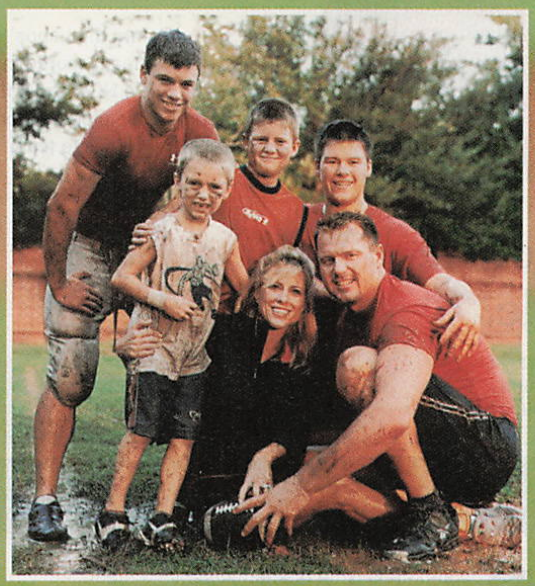
Compiled by Melissa Segura

PETER READ MILLER (FINAL FOUR, 2); JENNIFER REYNOLDS, BEAUMONT ENTERPRISE/AP (TUBBS); OZZIE SWEET (KINER); HEINZ KLUETMEIER (UNSER); GEORGE TIEDEMANN/GT IMAGES (WHITWORTH); HARRY BENSON (LOPEZ); JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES (URLACHER); J. WILDS/KEYSTONE/GETTY IMAGES (FOSTER)

HOME

Just 15 minutes from his family—and four months removed from his brief retirement—the ageless **Roger Clemens** is mowing down hitters and heating up the baseball climate in Houston

BY TOM VERDUCCI

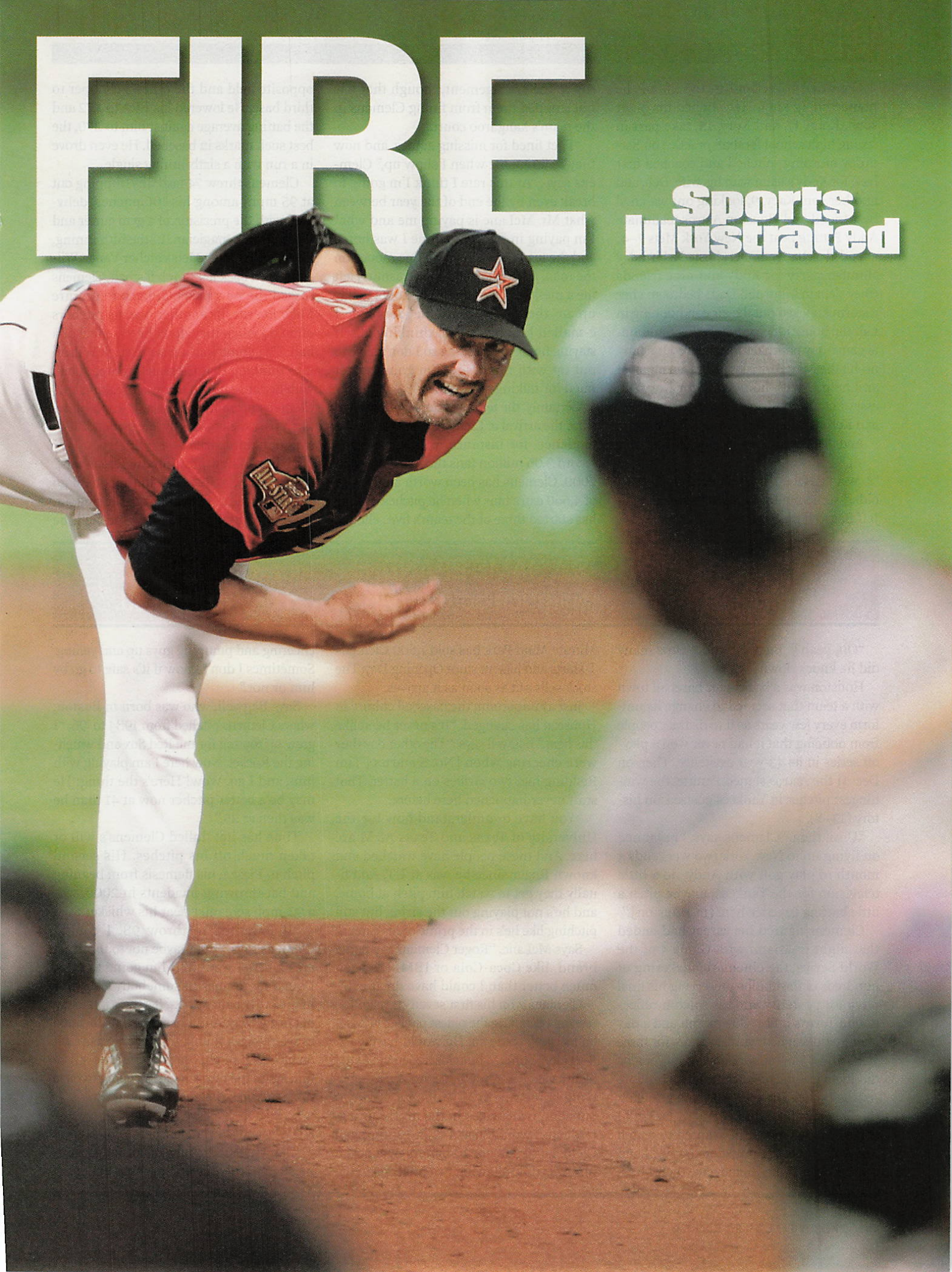


RICHARD CORMAN

DOWN AND DIRTY Everyone gets in the mix in the Clemens clan (clockwise from top: Koby, Kacy, Kory, Roger, Deb and Kody), but Dad is still king.

ROGER CLEMENS stands on the mound with his cap pulled low and the baseball in his right hand, looming larger than everyone else on the field. Another batter in a line of confrontations 21 years long starts to dig in against the six-time Cy Young Award winner. Clemens immediately begins to process the information stored on his mental hard drive. *Where does he like the ball? What pitches can he handle?* ¶ This is the moment that explains why Clemens is not retired, why that thick, warm night seven months ago in Miami, when tears welled in his eyes as he sat alone for 10 minutes in the office of New York Yankees manager Joe Torre, would not stand as his farewell to baseball. This is the moment that keeps him going. It is just Clemens, the hitter and that small airspace between them that is so fertile with possibilities—just them, anyway, until the third baseman approaches with something important to ask. ¶ "Excuse me, but are you really Roger Clemens?" ¶ The third baseman is a child about the size of Clemens's right leg, who must crane his neck as if viewing a skyscraper. This is a Midget Division playoff game in the Spring-Branch Memorial Sports Association, a coach-pitch league in Houston. Fifty-five feet between bases, 145 feet down the line and, most important, less than two miles from the Clemens house. The second most prolific strikeout pitcher of all time, otherwise known as Kody Clemens's dad, has put down his camcorder last Saturday morning to pitch to Kody's team, the Rockies. It is also Kody's eighth birthday. ¶ Clemens is just like any other dad on one of the four fields near the Pine Shadows Elementary School, except he will sign autographs after the game and blow away major league hitters the next day with almost comic ease. At 41 Clemens has come home. To Houston, to family, to greatness.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AL TIELEMANS


FIRE
Sports Illustrated

Consider a weekend in the life of the homecoming king. He watched his older sons, Koby, 17, and Kory, 15, take part in spring high school football practice on Saturday morning; pitched and coached first base for Kody's team with his wife, Deb, and another son, Kacy, 9, looking on; watched best friend and Houston Astros teammate Andy Pettitte beat the New York Mets 7–4; attended a charity dinner; hosted a birthday slumber party for Kody and nine friends (they slept in Mom and Dad's bedroom after a storm knocked out the air conditioning in half the house); helped make his traditional game-day pancakes for the brood; nearly no-hit the New York Mets for seven innings; and helped with homework for Kory (an essay on why the drinking age should be 21) and Koby (reading Malamud's *The Natural*).

And that doesn't even include the best part.

"I WATCHED Roger pitch to eight-year-olds," someone told Astros first baseman Jeff Bagwell on Saturday.

"Oh, yeah?" Bagwell said. "How many did he knock down?"

Houston was a backwater baseball town with a team that seemed to change its uniform every few years as if to distract people from noticing that it had never won a playoff series in its 43-year existence. Then on Dec. 11 the Astros signed Pettitte, the winningest pitcher in Yankees postseason history (13–8).

"Until then," Clemens says, "I planned on flying up to New York two weekends a month to play golf with Andy, do a little television for the Yankees, maybe pitch a little batting practice here [in Houston]."

Clemens figured his career had ended that night in Miami with Game 4 of the World Series, the cinematic flickering of hundreds of flashbulbs preserving his final pitch for posterity and his solemn reflection in Torre's office. One month and a day after Pettitte signed with Houston, for three years and $31.5 million, however, Clemens did likewise, for one year and $5 million. Astros owner Drayton McLane clinched the deal when he told Clemens he could stay home whenever he wanted to watch his son's games. Team elders Bagwell and centerfielder Craig Biggio gave their blessing to the arrangement, though that has not stopped them from fining Clemens in the team's kangaroo court.

"I get fined for missing games, and now they're fining me when I show up," Clemens says. "At this rate I think I'm going to break even by the end of the year between what Mr. McLane is paying me and what I'm paying in fines. One time I was home and the team was collecting fine money on the road, and [catcher] Brad [Ausmus] left me a message that I had eight hours to pay up or the fines would be doubled. I e-mailed him back, 'I'm thinking about staying home and retiring so I don't have to put up with this.' Now I'm going to get fined for talking about fines."

Certainly, the team's coffers have swelled since the arrival of Clemens and Pettitte. Attendance, for instance, will surpass the record 3.06 million fans the Astros drew in 2000. Clemens has been worth an average of 4,660 extra fans when he pitches, and he has started three of the team's five sellouts. Minute Maid Park has sold 1,600 Clemens T-shirts and jerseys since Opening Day. The stock sells out as soon as it arrives.

Just as important, the baseball culture in Houston has changed. "It's never been like this here," Bagwell says. "The other day they were cheering when [No. 5 starter] Tim Redding had two strikes on a batter. That stuff never happened here before.

"You have to understand how big the University of Texas and Texas A&M are here. And these people have watched and known Roger since he was at UT. And finally they get to watch him pitch at home, and he's not playing out the string but still pitching like he's in the prime of his career."

Says McLane, "Roger Clemens is a name brand, like Coca-Cola or IBM. It's been much better than I could have dreamed."

Clemens won his first seven starts of the season, becoming the oldest pitcher in baseball history to do so. He would have been 8–0 after Sunday, but closer Octavio Dotel blew a victory for him by serving up a game-tying home run to Mike Piazza with two outs and two strikes in the ninth inning. (Houston would lose 3–2 in 13 innings.) Clemens struck out 10 batters over seven innings while allowing two hits, one to the opposite field and the other a chopper to third base. He lowered his ERA to 1.72 and the batting average against him to .170, the best such marks in baseball. He even drove in a run with a sixth-inning single.

Clemens threw 74 fastballs (topping out at 95 mph) among his 106 pitches, delivered with the precision of a gem cutter and the guile of a magician. In the fifth inning, for instance, after Mets catcher Vance Wilson fouled back a 93-mph fastball, Clemens tossed the new baseball back to umpire Mike Everitt for another one, as pitchers often do when they don't like the feel of a ball. The stunt was a ruse to trick Wilson into thinking that Clemens wanted a ball with better seams to throw a breaking ball. Clemens promptly threw a 94-mph blowtorch past the hopelessly late swing of Wilson for a third strike.

"I didn't know how intense Roger was," Ausmus says. "Between innings he'll go into this little area down from the dugout. We call it the Rocket Hole. And he'll be cheering and pumping guys up and yelling. Sometimes I don't know if it's safe to go by him or not."

"ROGER CLEMENS IS A NAME BRAND, like Coca-Cola or IBM," says McLane. "It's been much better than I could have dreamed."

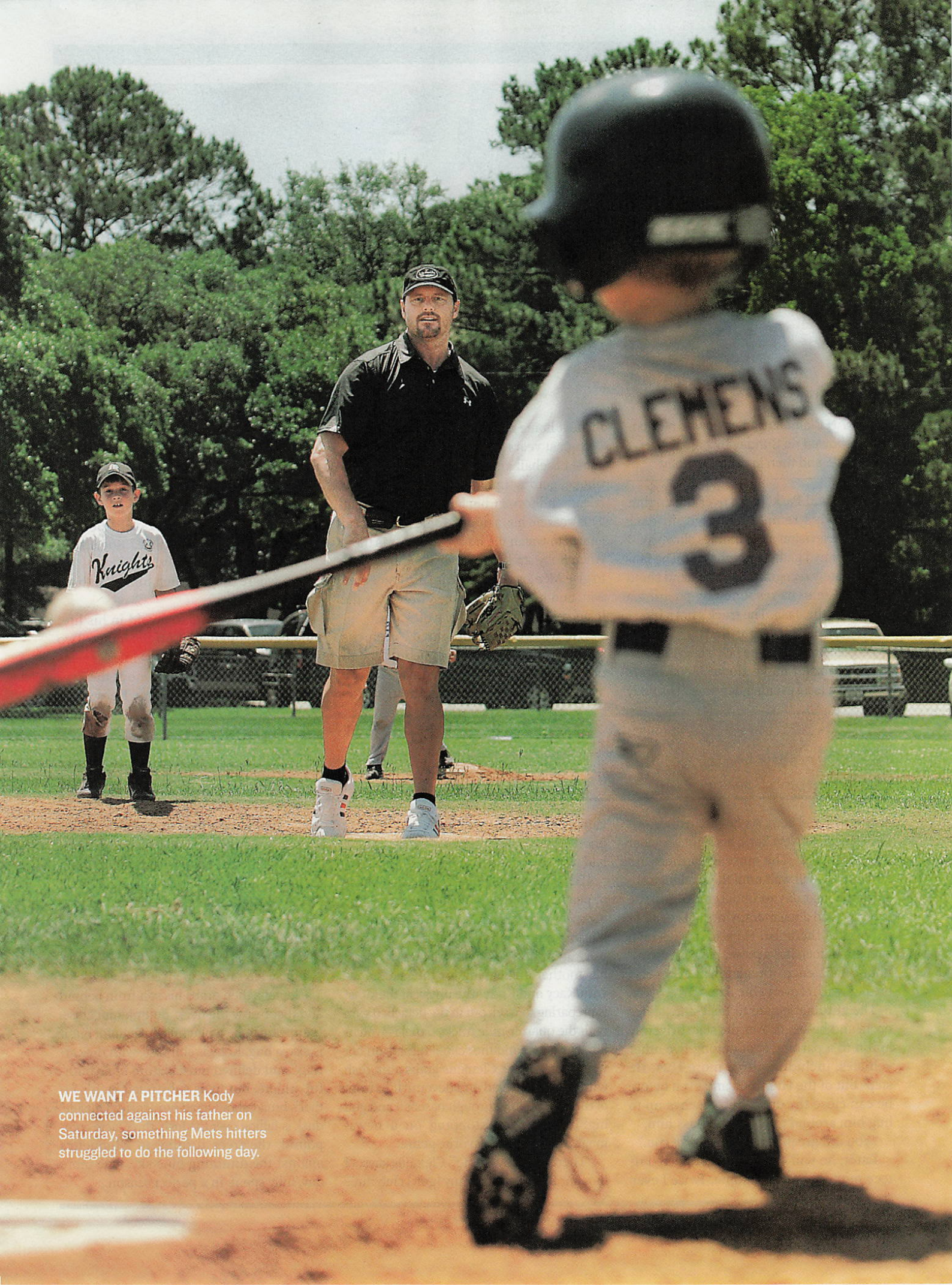
Says Bagwell, who was born in Boston, where Clemens pitched from 1984 to '96, "I grew up rooting for the Red Sox and watching the Rocket. Now here I am playing with him, and I go, Wow! Here's the thing: He may be a better pitcher now at 41 than he was then at 25."

Time has not dulled Clemens's will or taken much off his pitches. His second pitch to Piazza, his nemesis from beaning and bat-throwing incidents in 2000, was a 92-mph screamer near his whiskers.

"If I wanted to throw 98, I could," Clemens says, "but maybe not to the exact area where I want it. If I'm going to miss, I'm going to miss in somebody's shirt or in the other batter's box. It's their job to get out of the way. And I'm still as hardheaded as when I was young. If someone gets a hit on a certain pitch, I'm going to throw it to him again the next time. He's going to have to do it twice to make me a believer."

NOW COMES the best part.

Clemens climbs into his orange Hummer H2 in the players' parking garage at



WE WANT A PITCHER Kody connected against his father on Saturday, something Mets hitters struggled to do the following day.

BAT MAN Clemens knows how to hit, too, as he showed on Sunday by banging an RBI single and then instructing Koby.

Minute Maid Park, turns over the engine, flicks on his remote-operated, in-dash satellite television and rumbles slowly past a small crowd gathered at the exit. The fans immediately recognize the truck and shout to him. Clemens responds by pushing a button on the dash. The truck's horn blows a few bars of *The Eyes of Texas*.

As Clemens drives the H2, a televised version of himself mows down Mets hitters again on a local evening newscast. His body is fatigued and sore. As he pitched his last inning against New York, his right shoulder was throbbing. The muscles in there are swollen. He will wait until the swelling subsides the next day to undergo deep-tissue massage and aqua therapy with his personal physical therapist. He also has his own strength trainer. It is a power pitcher's metronomic existence: breakdown, recovery; breakdown, recovery; breakdown, recovery.

The automatic gate to his estate slides open, and he steers over the slate driveway apron to a parking spot among five other vehicles, including three more H2s. He steps out of the Hummer, and even before he can close the door, Deb reaches up to hug him around the neck and kiss him.

"You did great," she says. "I love you."

Later, he will say, "The best part? Fifteen minutes, and I'm home. Twice I even made it home before Deb and the kids did."

In past years Clemens would follow his sons' baseball and football games by telephone, getting updates from Deb or close friend and former big leaguer Mike Capel. This year he has skipped some Astros road games to watch the boys play. He was there when Koby stroked a clutch, two-run double to give Memorial High a come-from-behind win, and he was there when Koby was the losing pitcher in a state playoff game.

"He was very disappointed," Clemens says. "When we got home, he told me, 'I don't think I want to pitch anymore.' We sat and talked for about an hour in the garage. I was glad I was there. A 15-minute phone call wouldn't have been the same. I had to break out my Knute Rockne speech."

Clemens returns home to the usual bustle of people coming and going, dogs barking, doorbells clanging, intercoms buzzing, music blaring and telephones ringing. Koby and Kory are in the pool with friends; Deb and her mother are leaving for the lake house with Kacy and Kody; the physical therapist is preparing to work out in the detached gym with the quarter-mile track; Capel is watching television; and the school tutor is on her way to the house. Clemens grabs a tin dish with steak and salad and devours it in front of the TV, flipping through baseball and golf highlights before stopping on a newsmagazine show, his favorite genre.

"There's no downtime," Clemens says. "I thought I'd be getting to my [golf] club three times a week. I haven't had a sniff of that."

Koby later takes a break from his tutoring session to hang around with his father. They talk about Clemens's RBI single and Piazza's game-tying homer.

"What did Piazza hit off Dotel?" he asks.

"Fastball, out over the plate," Roger says.

"He likes the ball away."

"So where do you pitch him? You have to crowd him."

Koby then admits to a void in his life: He's never gotten a hit off his father. Two years ago in spring training, while Clemens was pitching a simulated game at the Yankees' minor league complex, Koby went down looking on four straight fastballs. This year Clemens, mixing in sliders, threw to the Memorial players to prepare them for an opposing pitcher who threw 85 mph. Koby—swinging this time—whiffed against Roger again, after which he hurled his bat in disgust.

"I grew up watching the Rocket," Bagwell says. "Here's the thing: He may be a BETTER PITCHER now at 41 than he was then at 25."

Laughing at the stories, Clemens says, "Mufasa isn't ready to give it up yet."

Clemens then grabs his son from behind and just below the neck, pulling him close. It appears to be a playful choke hold, but it is also a hug. Koby is shirtless, with the carriage and defined musculature of a youthful athlete, but he is subsumed by his father's broad-shouldered immensity. Outside, dusk is falling over the lush, three-acre compound, the trees turning to silhouettes against the dimming blue sky. One more day, fully spent, in a perfect season. □

STEPHON O'BRIEN (LEFT)

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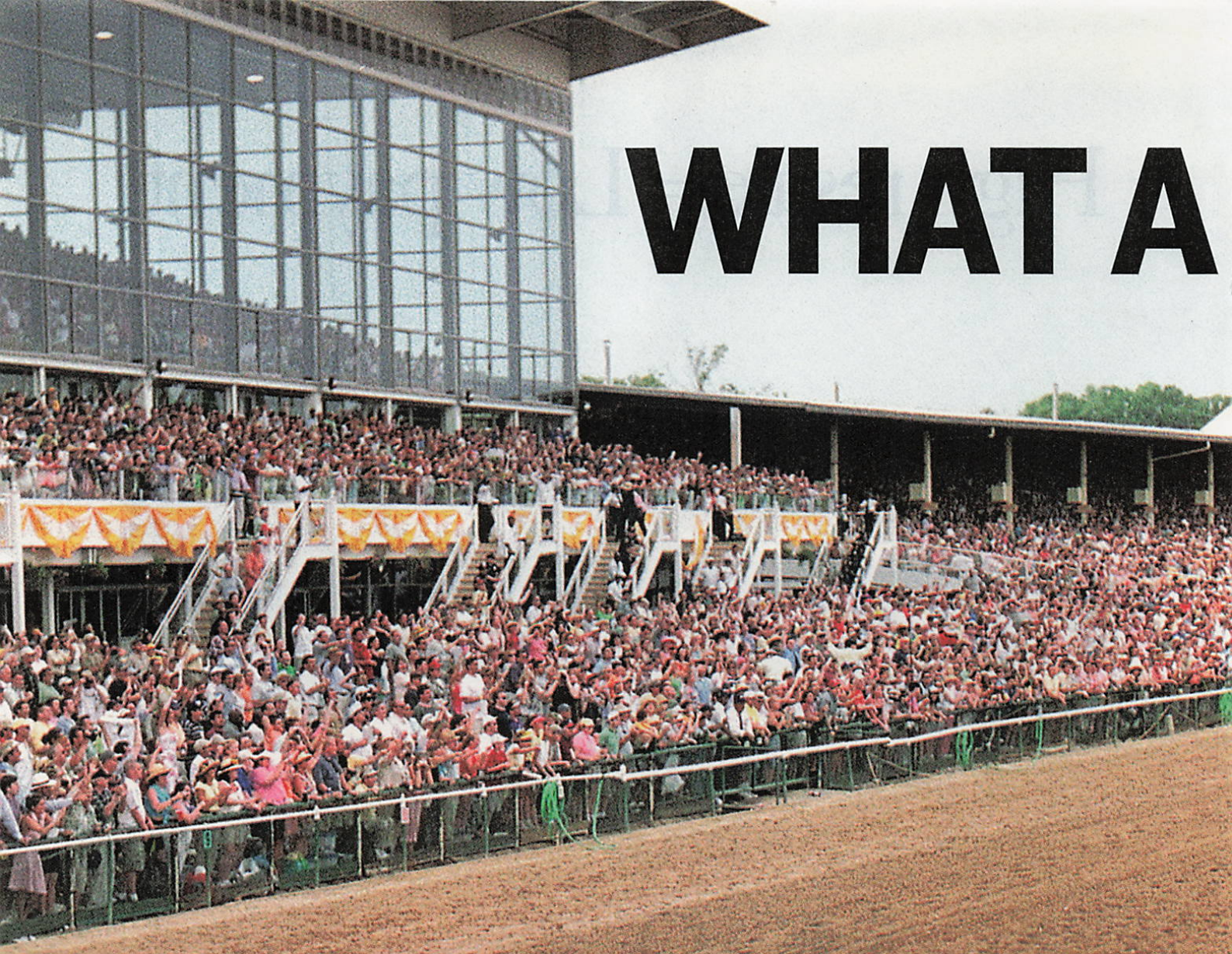
WHAT A

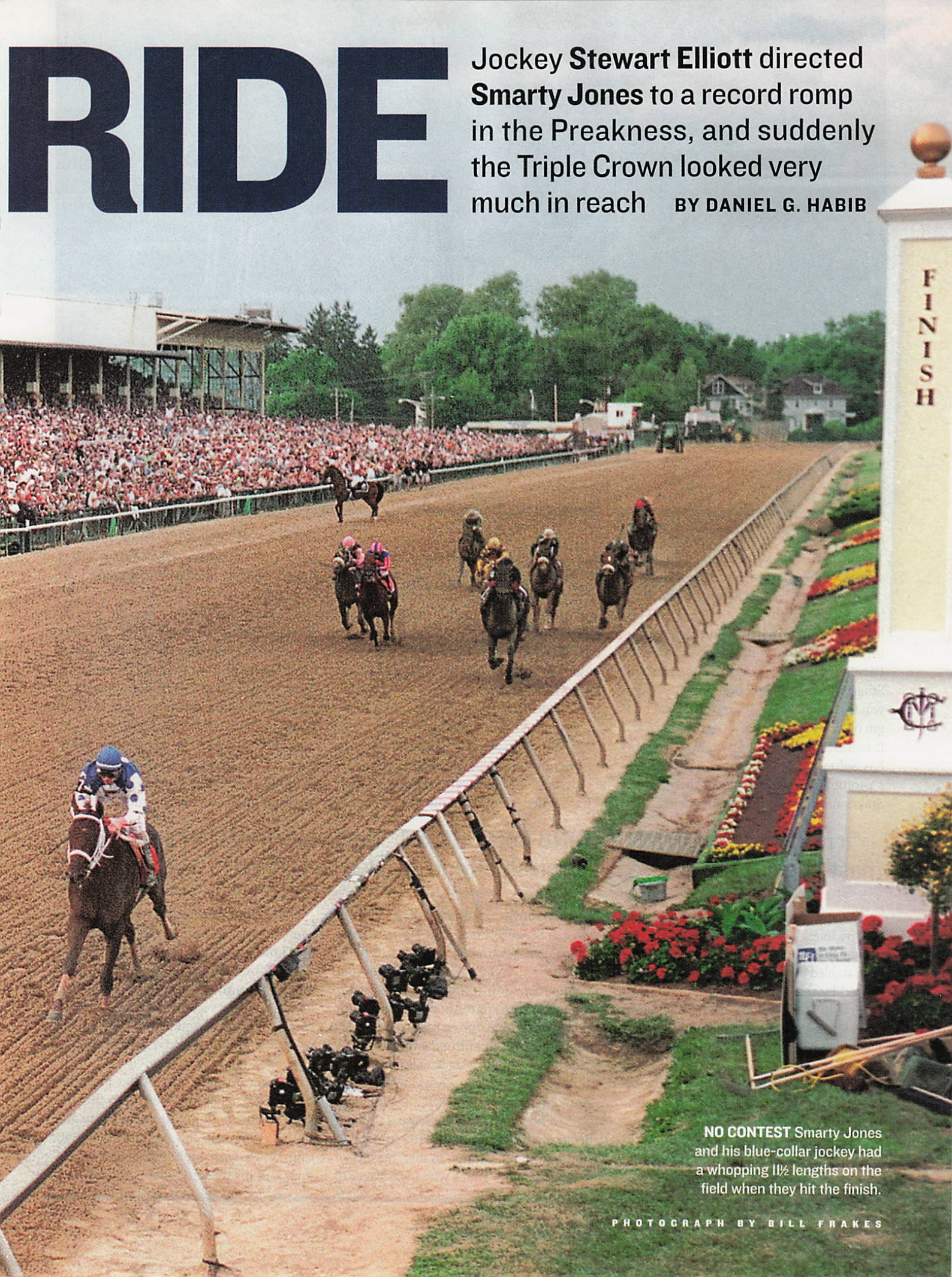


ATLANTIC CITY RACE COURSE slouches in decrepitude, the corrugated roof of its grandstand rusted, its infield tote board dark and disused. It sits off Route 322, which winds past roadside produce stands and boarded-up bars and restaurants. The track was thriving once, alive with glamour and personality—when it opened in 1946, its stockholders included Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra—but it is a bloodless simulcast parlor now, with thoroughbreds racing live only a few days each spring. Stewart Elliott, who until the first Saturday in May had been riding in obscurity, established himself at Atlantic City in the summer of '81, when he was the leading jockey as a 16-year-old apprentice. "This room was really nice," he said last week, his eyes lingering on the dusty corners of an empty lounge at the rear of the cramped jock's room. "There was a pool table over there, a Ping-Pong table over here, couches, shuffleboard in the back. And a really good kitchen." He looked again around a room that was so different.¶ For the past six months Elliott, 39, has been taken on the ride of his life by the hottest horse on the planet, Smarty Jones, but on this day at the Atlantic City track he had just finished ninth in a $16,000 maiden claimer, aboard Daly's Corner, like Smarty a John Servis trainee, one in the vast sea of interchangeable midlevel horses on which Elliott has carved out a living. "That horse I rode, that was for John," Elliott said. "It's just customers today. It's taking care of business." How different is business,

RIDE

Jockey **Stewart Elliott** directed **Smarty Jones** to a record romp in the Preakness, and suddenly the Triple Crown looked very much in reach

BY DANIEL G. HABIB



NO CONTEST Smarty Jones and his blue-collar jockey had a whopping 11½ lengths on the field when they hit the finish.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL FRAKES

BEEN THERE AND BACK Three days before the Preakness, Elliott was riding at the Atlantic City track where he started out.

SIMON BRUTY

he was asked, from riding Smarty Jones? "If you had a Volkswagen and a Ferrari," he smiled, "which are you going to take?"

Three days later, last Saturday afternoon, before a record throng of 112,668 at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore, Elliott, wearing the blue-and-white silks of Someday Farm, rode the powerful chestnut colt Smarty Jones to a breathtaking 11½-length win in the Preakness. It was the largest margin of victory in the race's 129 runnings, and it made Smarty—who in eight starts now has eight wins, by a combined 47½ lengths—a prohibitive favorite to take the Belmont Stakes on June 5 and become racing's first Triple Crown winner since Affirmed in 1978. Smarty Jones is a humble and unlikely supplicant at history's doorstep, a Pennsylvania-bred stabled at provincial Philadelphia Park, owned by self-described ham-and-eggers Roy and Pat Chapman, trained by Servis and ridden by Elliott, moderately successful hard knockers both, but little known outside mid-Atlantic racing circles.

Elliott's path, it became clear last week, has been the most tortuous. Born in Toronto, he emigrated to Hong Kong at the age of seven with his parents, Dennis and Myhill, so his father could ride there. Like many jockeys, Dennis struggled to keep his weight down. "He would be out jogging, then get in the car with the heater running," Stewart says. "Or he would come home and get right in the bathtub, filled with hot water and epsom salts, plus he would have an electric heater in there, with a towel under the door." When Stewart was 11, his father passed out during a steam session and fell against the bathroom door, his body holding it closed. "I remember my mom coming into the kitchen, saying, 'Help me, help me!' " Stewart says. "We got the door open to where I was small enough to get inside. I remember his eyes were back in his head. That's when he quit riding. He was fighting it too much. He almost killed himself."

When Stewart was 12, the Elliotts moved to northern New Jersey and bought a 25-acre farm. Myhill gave riding lessons, and Dennis turned to training. Soon Stewart was urging his parents to let him quit school so he could devote more time to riding. He was an unenthusiastic student—while autographing a stack of Smarty Jones caps last week, he said, chuckling, "I never used a pen this much in school"—and was eager to ride professionally. "Also, I thought the same thing that happened to my dad would probably happen to me," he says of battling weight. "That's why I was eager to start when I was young. I was 100 pounds. My weight wasn't a problem yet." He started riding at Philly Park, then blossomed as a bug boy at Atlantic City. With his parents living 45 minutes away, Elliott moved into a 25-foot trailer at a campground near the track, on his own for the first time in his life. The older jocks, notably Tony Black, who had run fourth in the Kentucky Derby in the spring of 1981 aboard Classic Go Go, were a kind of surrogate family.

"It might have been a **BLESSING IN DISGUISE**," Servis says of Elliott's troubled past. "He opened his eyes, got dedicated and decided he wanted to be a top rider."

"One time in a race, I was in behind some horses, and my horse wanted to go, and I had nowhere to let him," Elliott recalls. "Tony was outside of me, and he held me in there. You don't want to yell or ask for help unless you have to, unless you're going to go down. And he was just teaching me, you know? Just from riding with those guys, they made you learn."

Elliott was successful but, like his father, began to struggle with weight. In the mid-'80s a horse walking to the starting gate flipped him onto the rail at Calder Race Course. He was sidelined with a back injury, and his weight ballooned. Unable to

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control it, he quit riding for a year and a half, working as an exercise rider for little pay. He bounced around minor league tracks and, living a hardscrabble existence, became an alcoholic. That, he says, was responsible for the criminal record that became public last week: guilty pleas to simple assault and criminal mischief, in incidents involving an ex-girlfriend, and aggravated assault, after he beat an acquaintance with a beer bottle, a pool cue and a wooden stool. He was fined more than $1,000 for the first offenses; for the latter he received one year of probation and was ordered to pay the victim's medical bills. (Last Thursday the Kentucky Horse Racing Association fined him $1,000 for failing to disclose the assault charges on his application to ride at Churchill Downs.) "If it wasn't for Smarty Jones," he said ruefully last week, "none of it ever would have come up. A lot of bad things happened in my life that I'm not proud of. I just want to forget about them and go on."

Elliott went through rehab in the summer of 2000, and soon after, Danny Dubuc, effectively his sponsor, introduced him to Lauren Vannozzi, who is now Elliott's fiancée. "I was staying with Danny," she says, "and I came home and saw this little guy sitting on the couch. I was like, 'Who the hell are you?' But being around each other, doing things together, we got close." His drinking, and the problems it caused, Vannozzi says, are "done with, taken care of, in the past. Nobody harps on it."

The Chapmans and Servis were aware of Elliott's situation, but the trainer was so confident of Elliott that he never considered changing jockeys for the Derby. "I knew what Stew was going through," says Servis. "Quite frankly it might have been a blessing in disguise. He opened his eyes, got dedicated and decided that he wanted to be a top rider." Elliott responded with a masterly ride at Churchill Downs and was spectacular again at Pimlico. After a twice-delayed start—Imperialism lost the shoe on his left foreleg and was returned to the paddock and reshod, and the fractious Rock Hard Ten was reluctant to load—Smarty, hammered down at the betting windows to a 3–5 favorite, broke sharply on top, then conceded the lead to Lion Heart. Under Mike Smith, Lion Heart raced, as is his preference, three or four paths off the rail, and Elliott, glued to his right flank, went wider still around the first turn. But Smarty was moving with an easy, powerful gallop, and Elliott, unconcerned, wanted only to give him an unobstructed trip. He remained wide while tracking comfortable fractions: a half-mile in :47⅕, six furlongs in 1:11⅘.

At the ⅜ pole Elliott looked left, saw space and, using Smarty's exceptional tactical speed, ducked to the rail, slipping inside Lion Heart and snatching the lead on the far turn. Said Patrick Biancone, Lion Heart's trainer, "Smarty Jones swallowed him in two jumps." It was an efficient move, perfectly timed, and it left Elliott at the top of the stretch with only daylight between himself and the wire.

Elliott hand-rode Smarty through the stretch, tapping him twice with a furlong to go, and the colt exploded to win in 1:55⅘. That validated his Derby victory, which many felt was aided by a speed-favoring, front-runner's bias on the sloppy Churchill track. "If anybody had any doubts, they shouldn't now," said Jason Orman, the trainer of runner-up Rock Hard Ten.

Nine horses since Affirmed have won the first two legs of the Triple Crown, including five in the past seven years, only to fall short in the grueling 1½-mile Belmont. Rock Hard, freakishly sized at more than 17 hands, and lightly raced—the Preakness was his fourth start—appears to be Smarty's toughest obstacle. Excluded from the Derby because of insufficient graded stakes earnings, Rock Hard overcame not only his misbehavior at the gate but also getting strung out six- and five-wide around the turns, to close impressively, two lengths clear of Eddington. "He's got so much room for improvement," Orman had conceded last Thursday, "that I don't know if he'll be as good as he can be in this race."

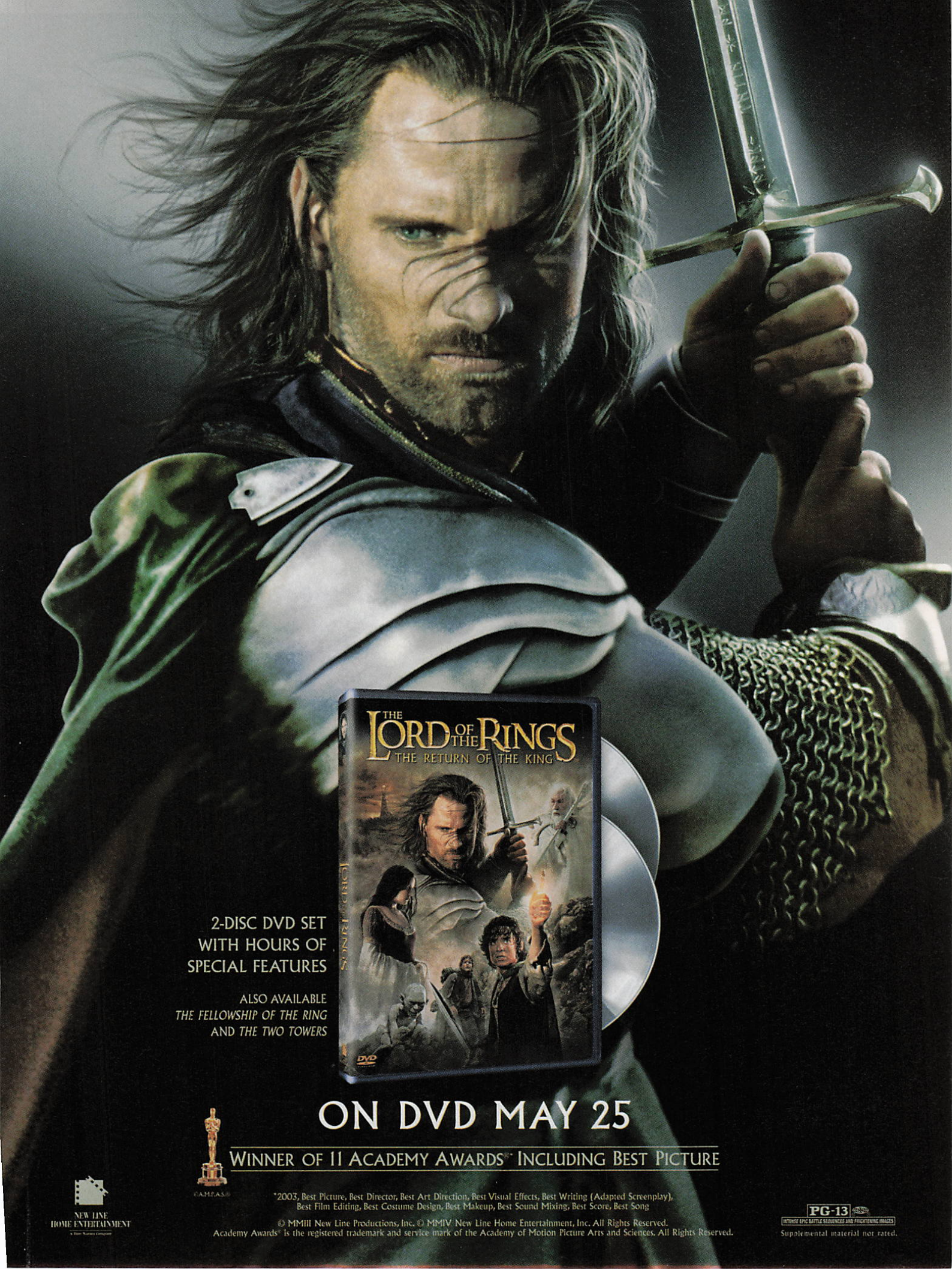
But the spotlight now belongs to Smarty Jones, who with a Belmont victory would earn a second $5 million bonus (Smarty collected the first by sweeping Oaklawn Park's Rebel Stakes and Arkansas Derby and the Kentucky Derby), thereby becoming the richest racehorse in history. His backstory strains the limits of plausibility; his success ennobles the Chapmans and Servis, and Elliott maybe most of all, who have all walked a difficult road to stand on the brink of greatness. "When you're starting out, you have to go through a lot of hardships," Servis says. "When I left college and went to work for Scotty Schulhofer at Monmouth, I was living in a room at the end of the barn. Wasn't making much money. I'd go to the grocery store once a week to stock up on peanut butter and jelly. But those are the sacrifices you make to do what you love to do."

Servis paused. "I think this gives everybody hope." □

CRUISE CONTROL Elliott went to his whip only twice as Smarty Jones made his eighth victory in eight starts look easy.

SIMON BRUTY

Smarty ducked to the rail, slipping inside Lion Heart and snatching the lead on the far turn. Said Lion Heart's trainer, "Smarty Jones SWALLOWED HIM in two jumps."



*2003, Best Picture, Best Director, Best Art Direction, Best Visual Effects, Best Writing (Adapted Screenplay), Best Film Editing, Best Costume Design, Best Makeup, Best Sound Mixing, Best Score, Best Song

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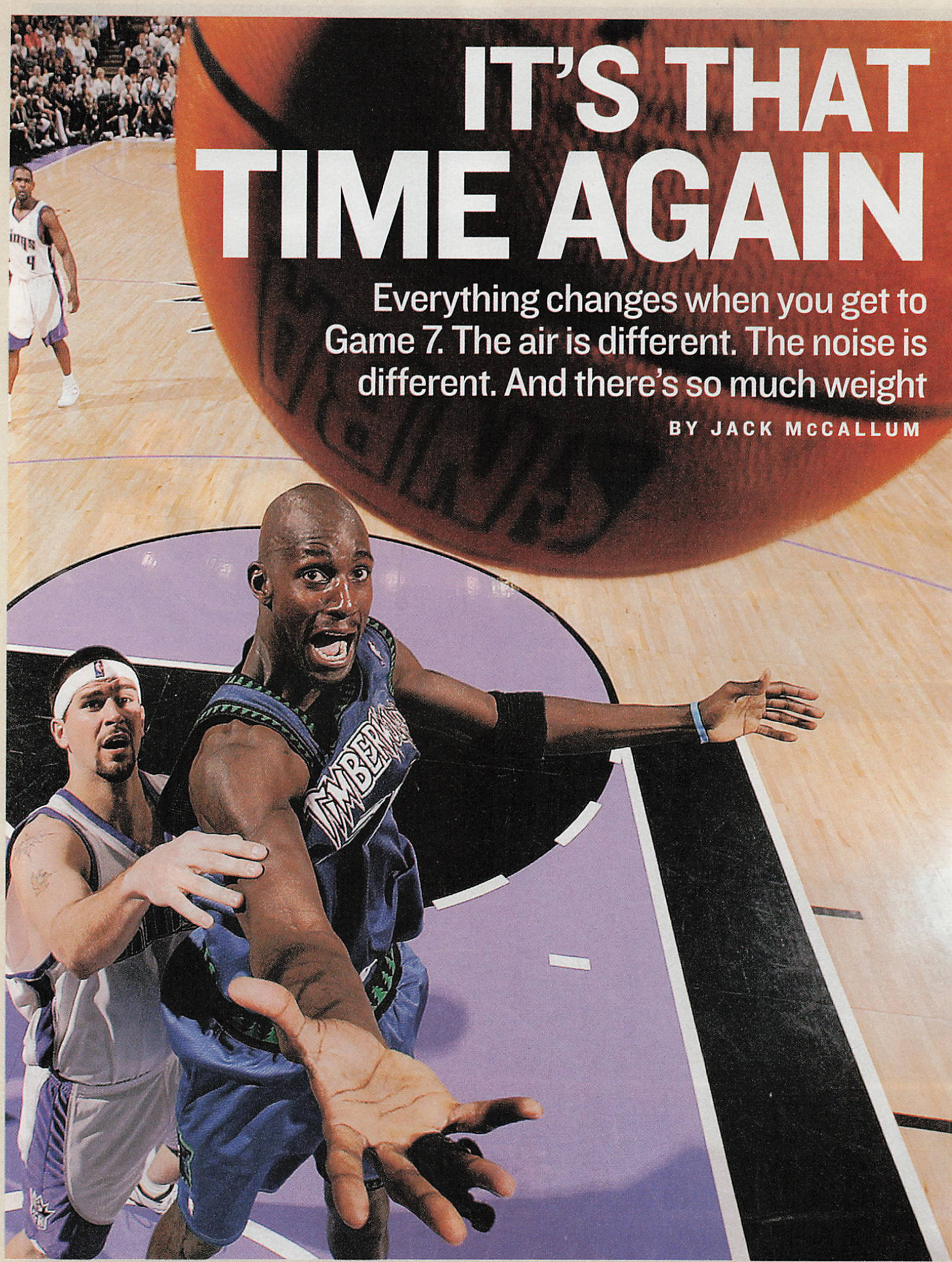
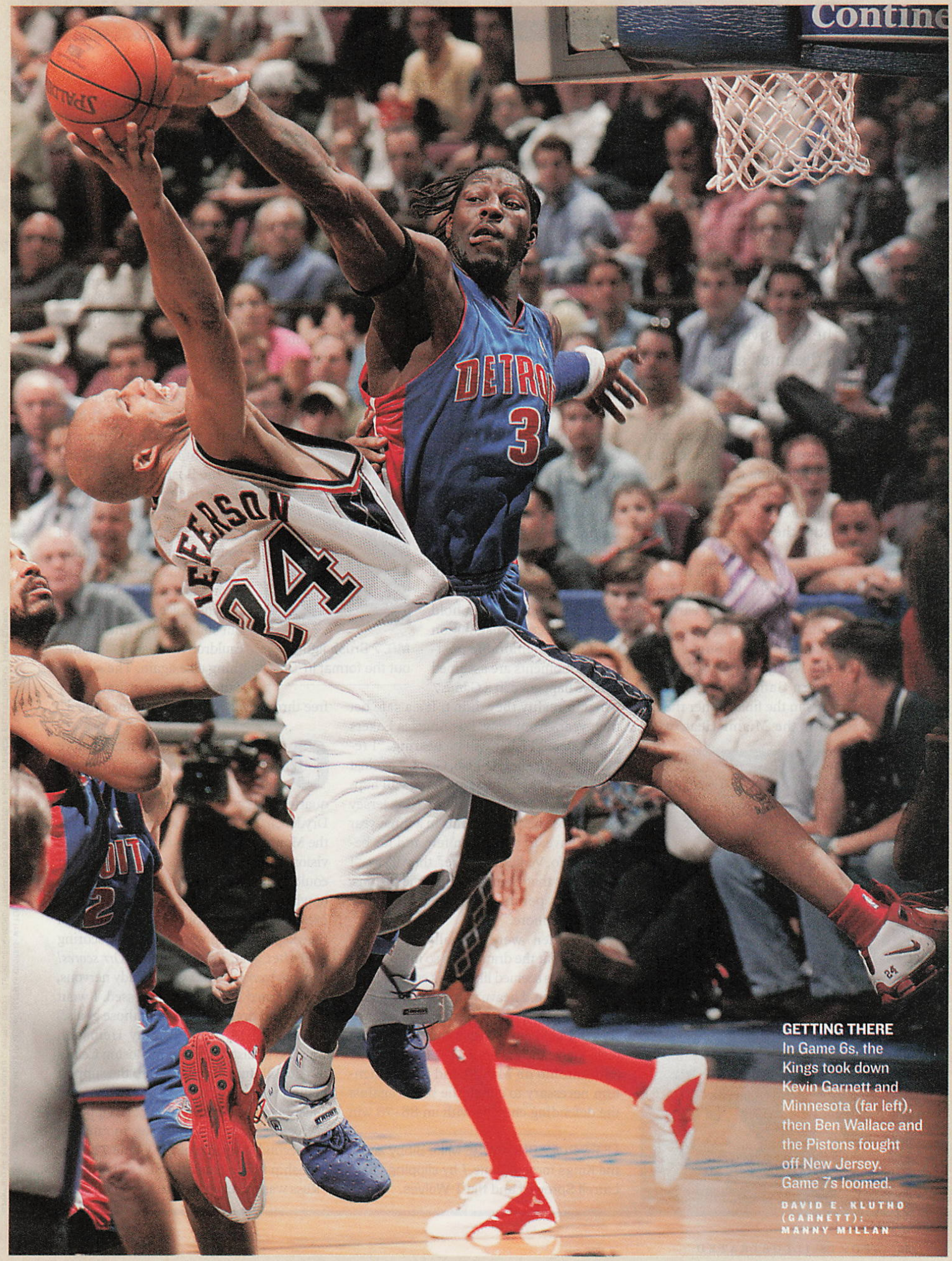
LOWERED
DEFIED

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

Everything changes when you get to Game 7. The air is different. The noise is different. And there's so much weight

BY JACK McCALLUM





GETTING THERE
In Game 6s, the Kings took down Kevin Garnett and Minnesota (far left), then Ben Wallace and the Pistons fought off New Jersey. Game 7s loomed.

DAVID E. KLUTHO (GARNETT); MANNY MILLAN

Seven is a good handy figure in its way, picturesque, with a savor of the mythical.
—Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

'TIS THE season of Game 7s, a time when the drama of sports is at its peak, when the sound track accompanying our games should feature the stentorian tones of John Facenda. *And so the stage is set for an epic Game 7. For one team, there will be glorious victory; for the other, there will be no tomorrow.* Tell it, John. ¶ Indeed, there is nothing in sports as fraught with tension and as memorable to its participants as the decisive game of a postseason series. "Right now is the time we all dreamed about: Game 7," said Chris Webber after a 104–87 win on Sunday earned his Sacramento Kings a one-game showdown, scheduled for Wednesday, against the Minnesota Timberwolves.

The spring had already yielded four early Game 7s, as welcome to the sporting landscape as early-blooming daffodils to the home gardener, when three NHL first-rounders went the distance. And as of Monday, both the Eastern (Tampa Bay–Philadelphia) and Western (San Jose–Calgary) Conference finals had the chance of maxing out. In the NBA, meanwhile, Detroit, like Sacramento, earned a Game 7 opportunity in a conference semifinal with a Game 6 win on Sunday; the Pistons beat the New Jersey Nets 81–75 to set up an Eastern Game 7 on Thursday. Their opponents in the final, either the Indiana Pacers or the Miami Heat, were scheduled to lock up in a Game 6 on Tuesday (after SI's press time), with the Pacers ahead 3–2 and the Heat trying to advance to its second Game 7 of the spring (having beaten the New Orleans Hornets in the ultimate game of the opening round).

JOHN BIEVER (BASKETBALL); NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

LET'S PLAY ONE MORE Mike Bibby and the Kings forced Game 7 by slipping past Latrell Sprewell and the T-Wolves.

Game 7s have such a hold on our collective imagination that many memorable postseason moments are assumed to have happened in a Game 7, when in reality they didn't. It's a safe bet that, years from now, Los Angeles Lakers guard Derek Fisher will be hearing, "I remember your shot, D-Fish. Game 7 against the Spurs, baby." The same thing will happen to Brian Scalabrine of the New Jersey Nets, whose heroic moments in a three-year career have, to date, been few and far between. "Yo, Veal Scalabrine," they'll say, "I remember that Game 7 against the Pistons. Seventeen points. Man, they should've played you more."

Both men were actually heroes of Game 5s, but the drama was so intense that those games seemed like series enders. Fisher's turnaround heave with 0.4 seconds left on the clock—T-shirts bearing the inscription 0.4 are being worn around L.A. these days—gave the Lakers a 74–73 victory over San Antonio on May 13 and the momentum necessary to clinch the series against the defending champs with an 88–76 win two nights later at the Staples Center. And Scalabrine's all-around play (he was "the MVP, hands down," Nets forward Richard Jefferson said) was the catalyst in the Nets' 127–120, triple overtime marathon win over the Pistons on Friday night.

Ah, but fame is transitory: Except for two personal fouls and one steal, Scalabrine put up a line of zeros in 10 minutes of play in Sunday's Game 6 loss. Still, the Nets' fan favorite had a chance to redeem himself on Thursday night, when something special was bound to happen to someone.

"I remember all my Game 7s," says Larry Bird, who won six of the eight in which he played for the Boston Celtics. "Hell, if you don't remember them, what *do* you remember?"

MR. 7 Brush figured out the format in '05.

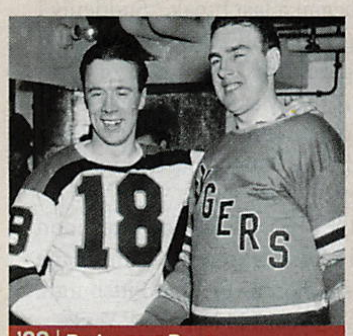
Game 7s are unique, of course, because of the stakes and the consequent pressure. Sports are always about displaying grace under pressure, but showing that grace in the cauldron of a Game 7 is something else again. The significance of every at bat, every free throw, every power play is magnified.

ON APRIL 17, 1971, the night before he was to face the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals at hostile Boston Garden, Ken Dryden, a 23-year-old rookie goaltender for the Montreal Canadiens, turned on the television in his hotel room. "The only thing I could find was *The Bruins Week in Review* or whatever it was called," says Dryden, now president of the Toronto Maple Leafs. "All they kept showing was the Bruins' scoring goal after goal. *Esposito scores! Orr scores! Esposito scores again!* I was already nervous, and I turned downright depressed. I went to bed and dreamed about all those goals."

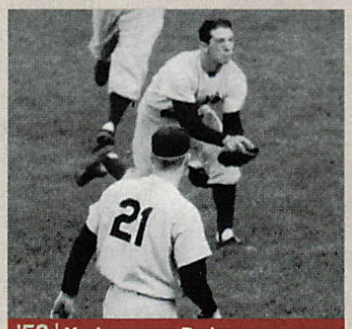
On April 13, 1957, Tommy Heinsohn watched in distress as fellow Boston Celtics rookie Bill Russell crashed into the support behind the basket after missing a layup off a fast-break pass by Bob Cousy. It happened at Boston Garden during a key moment in the second overtime of the Game 7 championship final against the St. Louis Hawks. "Russ was traveling so fast, he couldn't stop

(LEFT TO RIGHT, FROM TOP): AP; AP; HARRY HARRIS/AP; BETTMANN/CORBIS; WALTER IOOSS JR.; AP; JOHN IACONO; TONY TOMSIC; CARL SKALAK; JERRY WACHTER; MANNY MILLAN; RICHARD MACKSON; RONALD C. MODRA; DAVID E. KLUTHO; JOHN IACONO; TIM SHARP/AP; LOU CAPOZZOLA; CHUCK SOLOMON; BILL KOSTROUN/AP; FRANK GUNN/AP

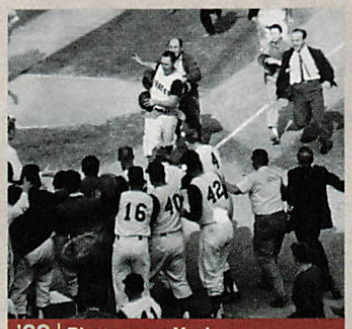
THE GLORIES OF THE ULTIMATE GAME | SEVENTH HEAVEN



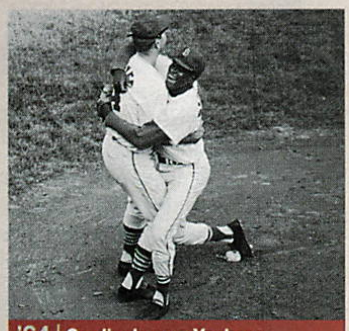
'39 | Bruins BEAT Rangers

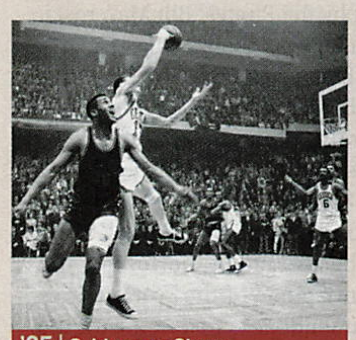


'52 | Yankees BEAT Dodgers

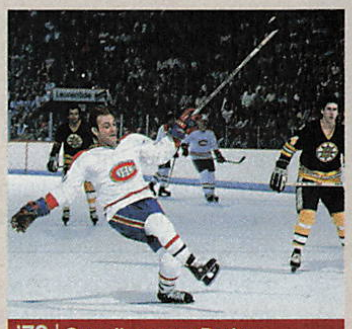


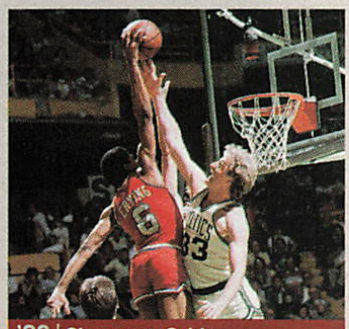
'60 | Pirates BEAT Yankees

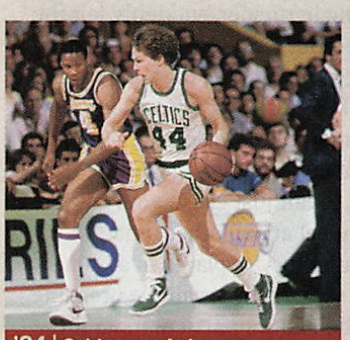

'64 | Cardinals BEAT Yankees


'65 | Celtics BEAT Sixers

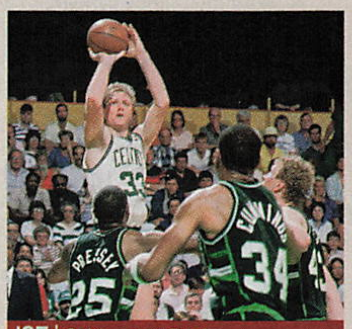
'69 | Celtics BEAT Lakers


'79 | Canadiens BEAT Bruins

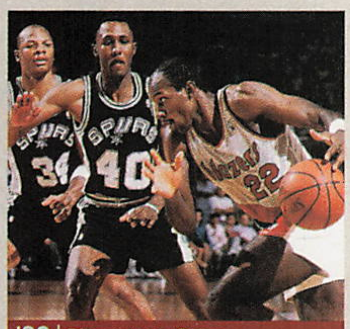

'82 | Sixers BEAT Celtics


'84 | Celtics BEAT Lakers

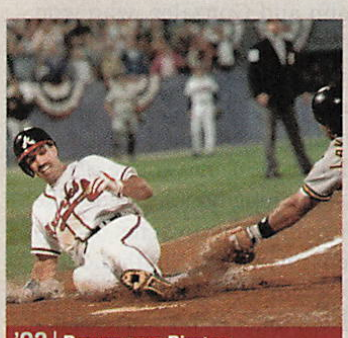
'87 | Islanders BEAT Capitals

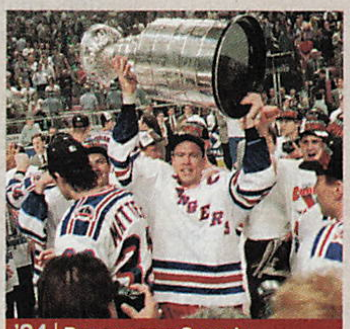


'87 | Celtics BEAT Bucks

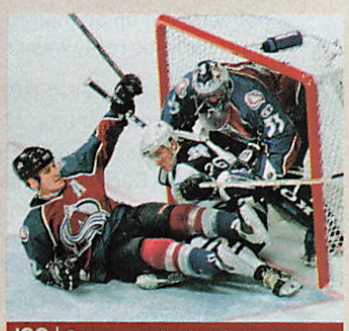


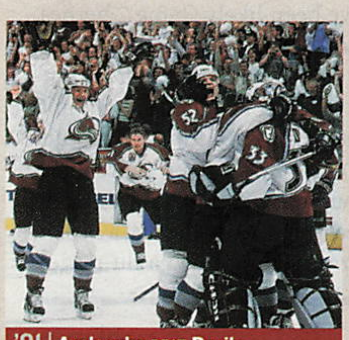
'90 | Blazers BEAT Spurs

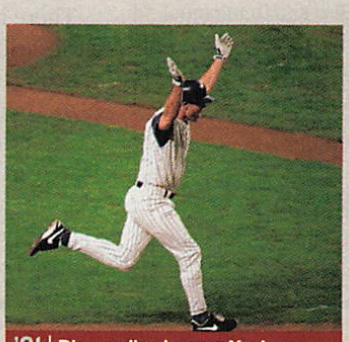

'92 | Braves BEAT Pirates


'94 | Rangers BEAT Canucks

'97 | Marlins BEAT Indians


'99 | Stars BEAT Avalanche


'01 | Avalanche BEAT Devils

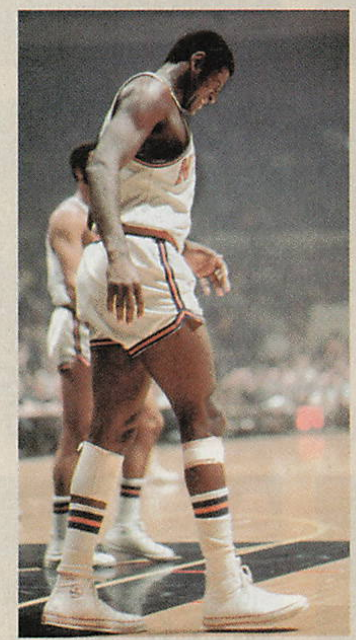

'01 | Diamondbacks BEAT Yankees

'03 | Yankees BEAT Red Sox

'04 | Maple Leafs BEAT Senators

SEVEN GAME 7s TO REMEMBER | BASKETBALL

1. NBA FINALS, April 13, 1957, BOSTON CELTICS VS. ST. LOUIS HAWKS, *Boston Garden*
During the second OT, long-legged Celtics rookie Bill Russell disentangled himself from the basket support after missing a layup, ran upcourt and blocked a shot by the Hawks' Jack Coleman. "Greatest play I ever saw," said Tom Heinsohn. Established stars Bob Cousy and Bill Sharman made only five of 40 shots, but the kids (Russell had 19 points and 32 rebounds, Heinsohn 37 and 23 rebounds) led the way to a 125–123 victory.



NO GUTS, NO GLORY Reed was in no shape to carry the Knicks, but he gave them a big lift.

2. NBA FINALS, May 5, 1969, BOSTON CELTICS VS. LOS ANGELES LAKERS, *the Forum*
Before the game the Celtics' John Havlicek got his hands on a script that described plans for a postgame Lakers celebration, including a rendition of *Happy Days Are Here Again* to be played by the USC band. When the Celtics walked out, they saw 5,000 balloons suspended in nets from the ceiling. Talk about the best-laid plans. Don Nelson's jump shot, which bounded off the back rim straight up into the air and down into the basket, was a key shot in a 108–106 Celtics' win.

3. EASTERN DIVISION FINALS, April 15, 1965, BOSTON CELTICS VS. PHILADELPHIA 76ERS, *Boston Garden*
With the Celtics clinging to a 110–109 lead—coach Red Auerbach had lit his traditional victory cigar when it was 110–103—the Sixers' Hal Greer tried to inbound the ball to Chet Walker under his own basket. But John Havlicek anticipated the play and was immortalized with Johnny Most's gravelly voiced call: "Havlicek stole the ball! Havlicek stole the ball! It's all over! It's all over!"

4. NBA FINALS, May 8, 1970, NEW YORK KNICKS VS. LOS ANGELES LAKERS, *Madison Square Garden*
True, the game wasn't really close, with the Knicks dominating 113–99 behind Walt Frazier, who scored 36 points and handed out 19 assists. But there's probably not a basketball fan alive who hasn't seen the film of Willis Reed hobbling out on an injured right thigh just before tip-off. Once he made his first two jump shots, he really wasn't that effective, but the morale boost jump-started the Knicks.

5. WESTERN CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS, May 19, 1990, PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS VS. SAN ANTONIO SPURS, *Memorial Coliseum, Portland*
Call it Willis Reed Redux. Though the hoops world in general doesn't remember Blazers center Kevin Duckworth emerging from the locker room to start the game after missing the previous six with a broken hand, it's remembered in Portland. The Duck provided the emotional lift, but the Blazers, who had trailed 97–90 with 2:32 left in regulation, needed five free throws from Clyde Drexler in the final 26.2 seconds of OT to prevail 108–105.

6. EASTERN CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS, May 22, 1988, BOSTON CELTICS VS. ATLANTA HAWKS, *Boston Garden*
The game turned into such a two-man shootout that it's known as "the Bird and Dominique Game." The Human Highlight Film, Dominique Wilkins, was never better, pulling out an endless variety of dunks, spin shots and jumpers banked high off the board to finish with 47 points. But Larry Bird scored 20 of his 34 in the fourth period as the Celtics won 118–116.

7. EASTERN CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS, May 11, 1986, MILWAUKEE BUCKS VS. PHILADELPHIA 76ERS, *Mecca, Milwaukee*
The Sixers owned the Bucks until this day, having beaten Milwaukee in the playoffs in four of the previous five seasons. But Julius Erving missed an open 15-foot jumper with two seconds left and Milwaukee held on for a 113–112 victory. —J.M.

himself to get a good shot," says Heinsohn. The ball bounded out past the foul line and the Hawks began a fast break. "Suddenly I saw this blur go by me," says Heinsohn. "I was running, but Russ went by like I was standing still. [Hawks forward] Jack Coleman went up for a shot and Russ blocked it from behind. After having been tangled up in the basket support!"

On Oct. 13, 1960, as the late afternoon shadows fell across the seventh game of the World Series at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh, Yogi Berra, a 35-year-old New York Yankees veteran, backpedaled in leftfield as he traced a fly ball hit by the Pirates' Bill Mazeroski. "I didn't think it was going to make it out," says Berra. "I turned around to get the carom off the wall. But the ball grazed the vines and made it over. To this day I don't know how." Berra laughs ruefully. "But it made it."

On Nov. 4, 2001, as he stepped into the batter's box at Arizona's Bank One Ballpark—bases loaded, bottom of the ninth, seventh game of the World Series and his Diamondbacks tied 2–2 with the Yankees—Luis Gonzalez, a 34-year-old, power-hitting leftfielder, suddenly felt the *weight*. "I felt the weight of the city, of my teammates, of my family, the weight, in a way, of all of baseball," says Gonzalez, now in his 15th major league season. "I mean, the weight of that situation in a Game 7. . . . If you let it, it can just crush you. It's like nothing you feel at any other time."

Decades after they've played in a Game 7, players can still vividly recall the pregame anxieties, the game's particulars and the postgame emotions (joy in the case of Dryden, Heinsohn and Gonzalez, who won those Game 7s; despair in the case of Berra, who won four Game 7s but not, alas, that monumental one at Forbes).

Do something heroic in Game 7, as Mazeroski did in 1960, and you're a hero forever. Do something boneheaded—like knock the puck into your own net, as Edmonton defenseman Steve Smith did in a 3–2 loss to Calgary in Game 7 of the '86 Smythe Division finals—and you're boneheaded for eternity.

There have been likely Game 7 heroes, such as St. Louis Cardinals righthander Bob Gibson (the only man to pitch three complete Game 7s, two of which he won) and Boston Celtics center Bill Russell (undefeated in 10 Game 7s). Even more compelling, though, have been the unlikely Game 7 heroes. Like Gene Guarilia, a Boston Celtics reserve who replaced a flu-ridden

JAMES DRAKE

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SEVEN GAME 7s TO REMEMBER | HOCKEY

1. PATRICK DIVISION SEMIFINALS, April 18, 1987, NEW YORK ISLANDERS VS. WASHINGTON CAPITALS, *Capital Centre, Washington*

The Islanders, who had trailed in the series 3–1, fell behind 2–1 before Bryan Trottier's goal tied the game with 5:23 left in regulation. The teams battled through 68 minutes and 47 seconds of overtime, the longest NHL game in 44 years, before Pat LaFontaine scored for the Islanders in the fourth OT.

2. EASTERN CONFERENCE FINAL, May 27, 1994, NEW YORK RANGERS VS. NEW JERSEY DEVILS, *Madison Square Garden*

There wouldn't have been a '94 Stanley Cup for New York without this thrilling 2–1 double-overtime win over the Devils. Long after New Jersey's Valeri Zelepukin had scored with 7.7 seconds left in regulation to send the game into overtime, the Rangers' Stephane Matteau scored a wraparound goal that set up the Rangers' date with Lord Stanley.

ICED In '94 Brian Leetch and the Rangers took a Game 7 en route to winning the Cup.

3. LEAGUE SEMIFINALS, April 2, 1939, BOSTON BRUINS VS. NEW YORK RANGERS, *Boston Garden*

The first best-of-seven semifinal format in league history wasn't decided until after 48 minutes of overtime, when a goal by Mel Hill, a winger who had scored only 10 of them in the regular season, gave the Bruins a 2–1 victory. Hill had scored two other overtime goals in the series and will be forever remembered in Boston as Sudden Death.

4. WALES CONFERENCE FINAL, May 10, 1979, MONTREAL CANADIENS VS. BOSTON BRUINS, *Montreal Forum*

The Canadiens, in pursuit of their fourth straight Stanley Cup, benefited from a too-many-men-on-the-ice penalty. Guy Lafleur took advantage of the infraction to score on a power play, and Yvon Lambert won the game for Montreal in overtime 5–4.

5. STANLEY CUP FINAL, April 23, 1950, DETROIT RED WINGS VS. NEW YORK RANGERS, *The Olympia, Detroit*

The underdog Rangers, who had to "host" Games 1 and 2 in Toronto because the circus was encamped in Madison Square Garden, took leads of 2–0 and 3–2 in Game 7, but couldn't capitalize on several late scoring opportunities. A goal in the second overtime by obscure winger Pete Babando gave the favored Red Wings a 4–3 victory.

6. STANLEY CUP FINAL, May 18, 1971, MONTREAL CANADIENS VS. CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS, *Chicago Stadium*

Chicago's Hall of Fame goalie Tony Esposito allowed Jacques Lemaire's shot from center ice to slip by him in the second period. Meanwhile, Montreal rookie goalie Ken Dryden made one of the greatest saves in Cup history when he got a pad in front of a point-blank shot by Jim Pappin. Dryden was voted series MVP, but the hero of Montreal's 3–2 victory was Henri (the Pocket Rocket) Richard, who, after being benched earlier in the series, came back to score with 2:34 left, then helped kill off two penalties.

7. CAMPBELL CONFERENCE FINAL, May 29, 1993, LOS ANGELES KINGS VS. TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS, *Maple Leaf Gardens*

Critics were saying that Wayne Gretzky, at 32 and battling a back injury, was too old to lead the Kings into the Stanley Cup finals as he had once promised. But in the first period he scored a shorthanded goal and set up Tomas Sandstrom for another goal. In the second he put a slap shot over Felix Potvin, and in the third he banked the puck off defenseman Dave Ellett to complete a hat trick and give the Kings a 5–4 win. —J.M.

Heinsohn in Game 7 of the '62 championship final against the Los Angeles Lakers and played like an all-star. Or Dryden, who, after starting only six regular-season games, won two playoff Game 7s as a rookie. Or Toronto defenseman Bob Baun, who suffered a broken left ankle from a Gordie Howe slap shot in Game 6 of the '64 Stanley Cup final, but didn't miss a shift in the Maple Leafs' 4–0 Game 7 victory.

And why do seven games a playoff series make? Apart from its significance in Las Vegas, seven, as Mann noted, has a mythical quality. The Greek Pythagoreans considered 7 the perfect number, being a combination of 3 and 4, the triangle and the square—the perfect figures. The number is mentioned frequently in scripture ("And He had in His right hand seven stars": Revelations 1:16). The Arabians had seven Holy Temples, the Romans had seven deities, the pirates had Seven Seas, Snow White had Seven Dwarfs, and, most mythically, *Gilligan's Island* had seven castaways.

Whatever New York Giants owner John Brush had on his mind (it wasn't Gilligan) when he established the World Series format at seven games, in 1905, is lost to history. The first World Series, in 1903, was actually nine games (there was no Series played in '04) before the Brush format took hold. It was followed through 1918, at which point the owners apparently got greedy—imagine that!—and went back to nine games. That was an unfortunate decision since the infamous 1919 Black Sox Series shouldn't have been any longer than was absolutely necessary. The nine-game format was played for three years, then the series was returned permanently to seven.

Chances are, hockey simply followed baseball's lead when it established the Stanley Cup series at seven games in 1939, and the NBA has also played a seven-game championship series from its inception, in '47. Gradually, hockey and basketball made all playoff series best of seven, the stated rationale being that a seven-gamer minimizes the chance of an inferior team pulling off a flukey upset. In reality the cash register may have been a decisive factor. Even tradition-bound baseball established its league championship series at seven games in 1985, and don't be surprised if its best-of-five first-rounders eventually expand to seven as the NBA's did in 2003. Aside from the wardrobe of the Dallas Mavericks dance team, when is the last time anything in sports has been shrunk?

DAMIAN STROHMEYER

Phone courtesy of Panasonic. *Based on 2005 preliminary estimates by Toyota and actual 2004 EPA-estimated 32 city/40 highway/35 combined mpg for Corolla S with 5-speed manual transmission. Actual mileage may vary.

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SEVEN GAME 7s TO REMEMBER | BASEBALL

1. WORLD SERIES, Oct. 16, 1912, BOSTON RED SOX VS. NEW YORK GIANTS, *Fenway Park*
A dropped fly ball by normally dependable Giants centerfielder Fred Snodgrass came to be known as "the $30,000 Muff" (that was the approximate difference between the winning team's and the losing team's shares) as it helped the Red Sox to a 3–2 win over Christy Mathewson. (Ironically, Snodgrass followed that error by making a sensational catch on a ball hit by Harry Hooper.) Wait—the Red Sox won a World Series? This was a long time ago. So long ago, in fact, that Game 2, tied at 6–6, was called because of darkness. So it was actually an eight-game seven-game series.

2. WORLD SERIES, Oct. 10, 1924, NEW YORK GIANTS VS. WASHINGTON SENATORS, *Griffith Stadium, Washington*
It just seemed the Nats (as they were commonly known then) were destined to win, which they did, 4–3 in 12 innings, but not without the help of two bad-hop hits that jumped over the head of third basemen Freddie Lindstrom and two key errors. Pitching in relief, the immortal Walter (Big Train) Johnson got the win.

WE DID IT Morris (blue jacket) and Co. greeted Gladden at the plate at the end of the '91 Series.

3. WORLD SERIES, Nov. 4, 2001, ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS VS. NEW YORK YANKEES, *Bank One Ballpark, Phoenix*
So, there's the best postseason closer in baseball holding a 2–1 lead going into the bottom of the ninth. Never mind what the dandy D-Back duo of Curt Schilling and Randy Johnson had done earlier: The Yanks looked like a lock. But Mariano Rivera got himself in trouble, and Luis Gonzalez won the game with a bases-loaded bloop single over a drawn-in shortstop Derek Jeter. Johnson got the win in relief.

4. WORLD SERIES, Oct. 13, 1960, PITTSBURGH PIRATES VS. NEW YORK YANKEES, *Forbes Field*
For once the bounces didn't go the Pinstripers' way, specifically an eighth-inning bad-hopper that nailed shortstop Tony Kubek in the throat and set the stage for a Hal Smith home run that put the Pirates ahead 9–7. The Yanks tied it in the ninth, but Bill Mazeroski, better known for his glove and second-base pivot, led off the bottom of the inning with the only walkoff Game 7 homer in World Series history.

5. WORLD SERIES, Oct. 27, 1991, MINNESOTA TWINS VS. ATLANTA BRAVES, *Metrodome*
Years before Bud Selig thought about contracting the Twins out of existence, Minnesota's Jack Morris and the Braves' John Smoltz, Mike Stanton and Alejandro Peña locked up in a scoreless duel for 9½ innings. The Twins' Gene Larkin singled home Dan Gladden with the winning run with one out in the bottom of the 10th to give Minnesota its second World Series title in five seasons.

6. NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES, Oct. 14, 1992, ATLANTA BRAVES VS. PITTSBURGH PIRATES, *Atlanta–Fulton County Stadium*
Shut out by Pirates ace Doug Drabek for eight innings, Atlanta rallied for three runs in the ninth inning for a dramatic 3–2 victory. A two-run pinch-hit single by little-known and not-long-remembered Francisco Cabrera drove home David Justice and Sid Bream, who was one of the slowest runners in baseball history.

7. WORLD SERIES, Oct. 15, 1946, ST. LOUIS CARDINALS VS. BOSTON RED SOX, *Sportsman's Park, St. Louis*
Boston shortstop Johnny Pesky hesitated before throwing home, and Enos Slaughter scored all the way from first base on an eighth-inning double by Harry (the Hat) Walker to give the Cards a 4–3 victory. —J.M.

BERRA, WHO has more Game 7 at bats (25 with only five hits, though three were home runs) than any other player in major league history, swears he was more nervous before his 19 Opening Days as a player than he was before his seven Game 7s. "By the time Game 7 came around," he says, "we had played so many games, it was easier to make that one seem like any other." True Yogi logic. But most others aren't so blasé about their Game 7s, like defenseman Ken Daneyko, who retired in 2003 after 20 seasons with the New Jersey Devils. At a team dinner the night before Game 7 of the '03 Stanley Cup final against Anaheim, New Jersey coach Pat Burns tapped the 39-year-old Daneyko on the shoulder and whispered, "I'm going to use you tomorrow." Daneyko had been a healthy scratch in the previous six games, but he had played in 11 Game 7s. So how did he take the news? "My heart went in my throat, I had goose bumps, I felt like a rookie and, I swear, I had tears in my eyes," says Daneyko. "I called my wife and said, 'I don't know whether I can do this. I think they're taking a chance using me.' " Fortunately his wife, JonnaLyn, talked him off the ledge. "She told me, 'You've played in as many Game 7s as anybody,' " says Daneyko. "This is meant to be.' " Sure enough, he performed well in the Devils' 3–0 victory.

Almost every athlete or coach will tell you that he tries to keep his pre–Game 7 routine as normal as possible. "Just like any of the other 600 games I've played in the league, I take a nap, say bye to my kids and head to the rink," says Toronto defenseman Ken Klee, recalling his preparation for the April 20 Game 7 against Ottawa. "It's about keeping your emotions in check and preparing to do your job."

However, trying to ignore the pressure is one thing; acknowledging that it's there, in those frightening private moments before the game, is something else. Toronto coach Pat Quinn, who has a 4–4 record in Game 7s, admits that he has "a fear of failure" before every Game 7. "You try all season to set high standards and high goals for your team, and suddenly you're in a situation where all your dreams and hard work could go down the drain if you don't win," says Quinn. "Then you start thinking about the

SI.com *For more NBA and NHL Game 7 playoff lore, including players who have been involved in the most series clinchers, go to* **si.com.**

RONALD C. MODRA

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end result, instead of what you have to do."

Danny Ainge, the Celtics' director of basketball operations, participated in nine Game 7s as a player and says he always made a conscious decision to turn the situation into fun. "If you don't," he said, "you can just shrivel up." To that end, before Game 7 of the '84 Finals against the Los Angeles Lakers, Ainge swiped a stethoscope from the team doctor and dashed around the Celtics' Boston Garden locker room, placing it on the chest of various teammates. "Let's see how nervous you are," he said to Kevin McHale. "You got a heartbeat?" he said to Cedric Maxwell. "It was a tension-breaker," says Ainge, "but I'm not sure everybody thought it was funny."

Dryden says that Game 7s carry such pressure that even the crowd is unnaturally nervous, and that can affect the players. "The crowd's desperate to be loud and energetic," he says, "and if things move along well for the home team, everything's O.K. But if things turn a bit, the silence that can come over a home arena in Game 7 is extremely disquieting. And the players feel it."

In general, Game 7s are played more conservatively, either because a coach or manager directs the game more conservatively or because the tightly wound athletes play it that way (or both). In any case, it's a product of the pressure. "Early on in a Game 7 you have to remind yourself how important every possession is," says Bird. "You have to take care of the ball much better than in a Game 1 or 2. There's so much emotion that turnovers become more important than they usually are." Bird believes that falling behind in a Game 7 is more serious than in any other game. "I always tried to figure out who was hot and get him the ball," he says. "You always try to do that, but even more so in a Game 7, because getting off to a great start is so important."

Although much has been made of momentum going into a Game 7, series clinchers tend to be entities unto themselves. You hear a lot about the rarity of a team coming back from a 3–1 deficit to win a series in the seventh game; that has happened only nine times in baseball and seven times in basketball. But even teams that forced the clincher by winning Game 6 don't fare that well in Game 7: Their records are 24–20 in baseball, 55–56 in hockey and only 26–59 in basketball.

But what endures in memory about Game 7s are the classic endings, made even more special because of the stages on which they're played out. The drama happens most often in baseball, where the battle between pitcher and batter is so elemental. Mazeroski takes Ralph Terry over the wall as the Pirates beat the Yankees in '60. Gene Larkin singles home Dan Gladden as the Minnesota Twins beat the Atlanta Braves in '91. Edgar Renteria singles for the Florida Marlins in the 11th inning of their Game 7 with the Cleveland Indians in '97, driving home Craig Counsell with the winning run. And Luis Gonzalez . . . well, let him tell you.

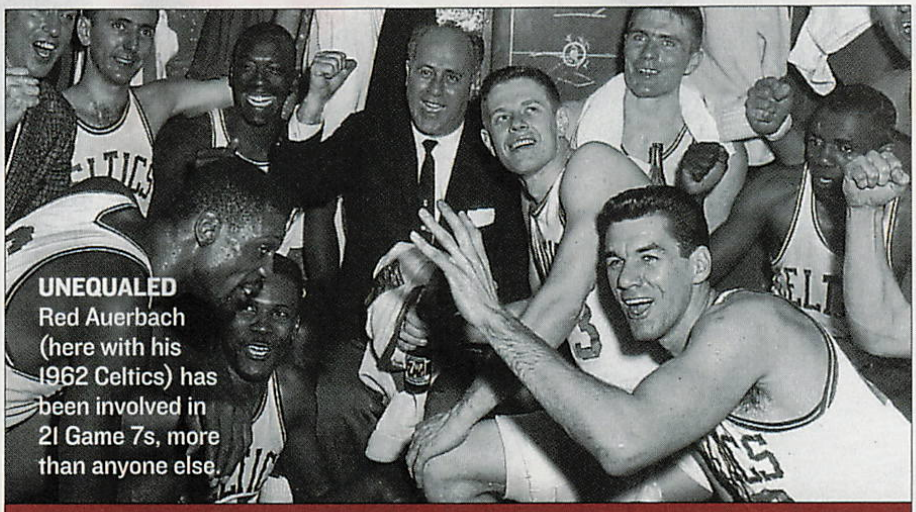
"I still remember what was going through my mind when Craig [Counsell] got hit by a pitch to load the bases, and I was coming up," says Gonzalez. "I'm thinking, I've dreamed about this situation my whole life. I mean, that's what you do in Wiffle ball, right? Bottom of the ninth, bases loaded, Game 7 of the World Series.

"You have to concentrate, but there're so many things going through your mind. [Yankees manager] Joe Torre decides to draw the infield in. O.K., what does that mean? [Yankees reliever] Mariano Rivera had struck me out the inning before. What adjustments should I make? Then those thoughts, what you *should* be thinking about, are pushed out by things you *shouldn't* be thinking about. 'I have a chance to be the hero, but I also have the chance to be the goat. Where in this city will I hide if I strike out? What is my family thinking down in Florida? I know they're all watching. Are they as nervous as I am? I can feel my friends and my teammates pulling for me. What if I let them down? This isn't a Game 1 or Game 2 where you still have time. This is Game 7!' "

Rivera throws a cutter and Gonzalez fouls it straight back. The reliever comes in with another cutter and Gonzalez gets it off the end of the bat toward leftfield. Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter goes back, but the ball falls safely; had Jeter not been drawn in, he probably would've caught it.

"As I was running to first base, I remember thinking, In my dreams I always hit a home run in that situation, but, man, I am absolutely thrilled with a bloop single," says Gonzalez. "I couldn't believe it was happening to me. I'm a sports fan above all else, and I love watching these situations, and here I am in the center of it.

"When I think back on it now, what I wish is that my family, my friends and all our fans could experience what I experienced in that short time. I wish I could bottle that Game 7 feeling. Because there's nothing like it." □



THE BREARLEY COLLECTION

UNEQUALED Red Auerbach (here with his 1962 Celtics) has been involved in 21 Game 7s, more than anyone else.

HOME IS WHERE THE EDGE IS

OF THE 240 playoff series that went the distance in the NBA, the NHL and major league baseball through 2003, the home team won 67.9% of the deciding games, nowhere more consistently than those in pro basketball.

	BASEBALL	HOCKEY	BASKETBALL
Total best-of-seven series	131	471	303
Series requiring seven games	44 (34%)	111 (24%)	85 (28%)
Game 7 wins by home team	23 (52%)	70 (63%)	70 (82%)

FASTER, YOUN

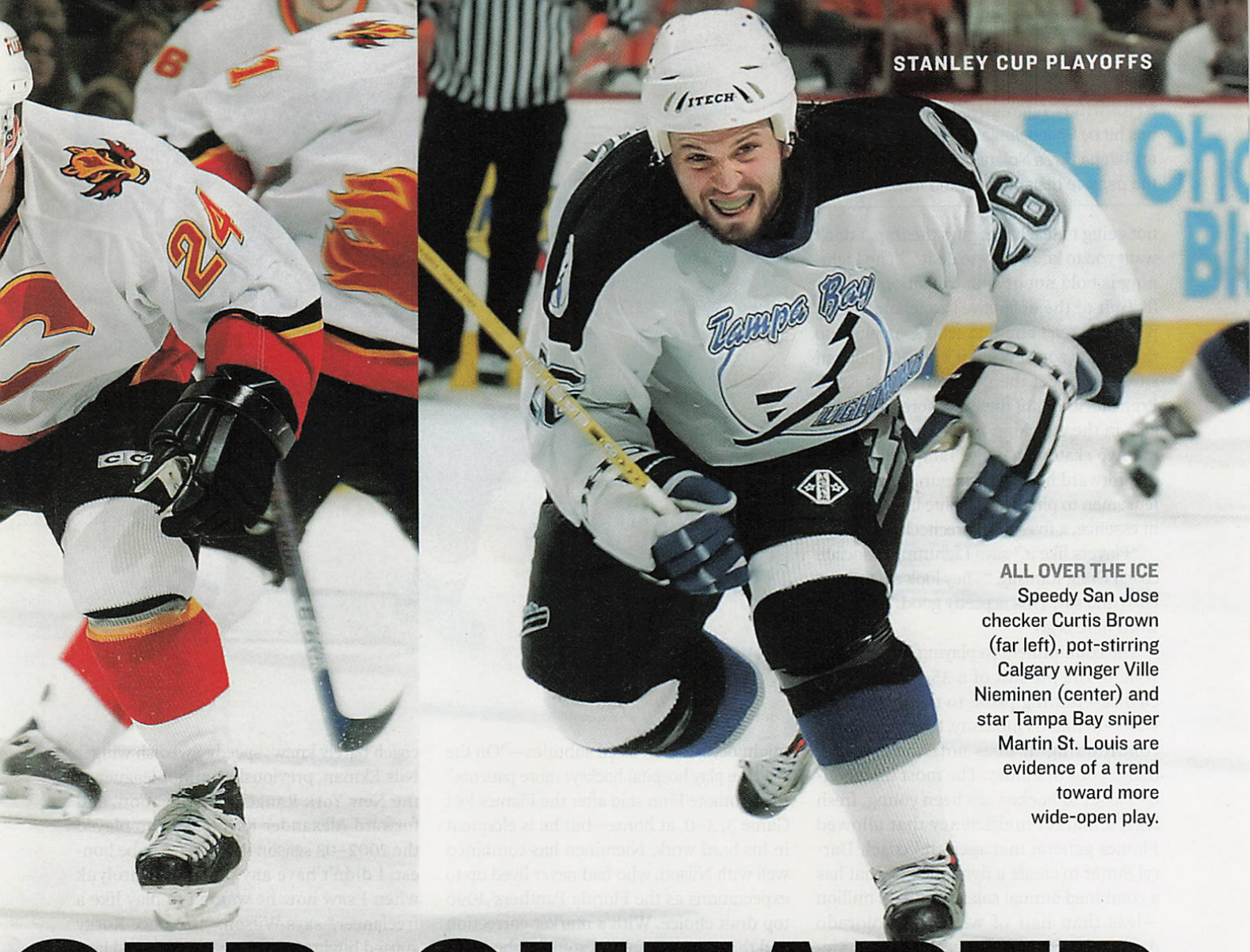
A high-speed postseason (ding-dong, the trap is dead!) has rewritten

BY MICHAEL FARBER

THE FASHION trend in the 2004 Stanley Cup playoffs: Forechecking is the new black. The neutral-zone trap is so five minutes ago. ¶ Now maybe there isn't much big-city buzz about the conference finals. (Quick, name three San Jose Sharks.) But in its absence, hockey fans are being rewarded with the unmistakable crunching sound of aggressive checking. You want juice, try the refrigerator. You want 200 feet of skating and hitting and the occasional dollop of creativity, try the pound-you-to-a-pulp Philadelphia Flyers or the slick Tampa Bay Lightning meeting the speedy Sharks or Calgary Flames in the Cup finals.

While the NHL is struggling to lure a TV audience (the league has been drawing about one quarter of the NBA's viewership this post-season) and seemingly poised to disappear into a work stoppage when its labor agreement expires Sept. 15, hockey may also be on the cusp of its most exciting style change in decades. High-priced designer teams like the Detroit Red Wings are out. Off-the-rack teams that have ditched the trap as a cornerstone of their schemes, such as the Flames and the Sharks, are in. After beating San Jose 3–0 on Monday, Calgary led the Western Conference finals 3–2, but both

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY SI IMAGING; JEFF VINNICK/GETTY IMAGES (BROWN); ICON SMI (NIEMINEN); LOU CAPOZZOLA (ST. LOUIS)



ALL OVER THE ICE Speedy San Jose checker Curtis Brown (far left), pot-stirring Calgary winger Ville Nieminen (center) and star Tampa Bay sniper Martin St. Louis are evidence of a trend toward more wide-open play.

GER, CHEAPER

the NHL stylebook. Should be a thrilling final—but are you watching?

clubs provide plenty of bangs for the buck.

Even the $65 million Flyers, who beat the Lightning 3–2 last Saturday to knot their series at two games each, are forechecking, their fat wallets apparently not slowing them as they've adjusted their game to Tampa Bay's. Still, name-brand Philadelphia, with the league's fourth-highest payroll and six core players over age 30, is the anomaly. The other semifinalists, who began the season ranked 19th (Flames), 20th (Sharks) and 21st (Lightning) in payroll, are a template for the new NHL: fast, young and cheap.

"You're seeing a trend develop, one that's good for hockey," says New York Islanders coach Steve Stirling, who has been sent by general manager Mike Milbury to study—translation: steal—the systems of teams like the Lightning and the Sharks. "A team like Tampa Bay comes at you pretty hard all the way. When you see them do it and have success with it, opening up the game and creating scoring chances all over the ice, you have to give thought to doing it yourself."

Speed is still principally in evidence on the forecheck and not on the attack, except when Tampa Bay is playing. The Lightning, whose artistry moved overheated Flyers coach Ken Hitchcock to compare Tampa Bay with the Wayne Gretzky–era Edmonton Oilers, runs its firewagon system thanks to goaltender Nikolai Khabibulin. Coach John Tortorella can green-light his skaters because Khabibulin, who had a league-best .946 playoff save percentage through Sunday, generally keeps the red light off even in the face of the odd-man rushes the Lightning's style can allow. The only time Tortorella makes reference to a trap is when he urges Hitchcock to shut his. "One time we were trying to simulate the trap in practice so we could work on our breakout against it," says 24-year-old Lightning center Brad Richards. "Finally [Tortorella] just blows the whistle and tells us to stop. He says, 'Forget it. I'm

STICKING IT Aggressive forechecking, like this hit by Philadelphia's Branko Radivojevic on Tampa Bay's Nolan Pratt, has replaced the passive resistance of the trap.

not going to teach you guys the trap. I don't want you to know how to do it.' " The Lightning is bold not only in transition—"They fly [out of the defensive] zone and cherry pick and aren't afraid to send someone into the neutral zone even if it's not 100 percent sure they'll get the puck out," says Keith Primeau, leader of the Philly forecheck—but also in the attacking zone, routinely sending two skaters in deep. Tampa Bay keeps one forward high and encourages both defensemen to pinch at the blue line to create, in essence, a five-man forecheck.

"Players like it," says Lightning associate coach Craig Ramsay. "They look at [the system] and say, This is pretty good. The main word here is *go*."

The commitment to playing an attacking style in the pursuit of a 35-pound silver chalice—putting pedal to the metal, as it were—demands intensity, team speed and conditioning. It does not, however, demand gobs of money. The most undervalued asset in hockey has been young, fresh legs, a market inefficiency that allowed Flames general manager and coach Darryl Sutter to create a dynamic line that has a combined annual salary of $2.45 million—less than half of what the Colorado Avalanche, San Jose's second-round victim, piddled away on Teemu Selanne after the Sharks did not re-sign him last summer.

Shean Donovan ($753,000), Ville Nieminen ($600,000) and Marcus Nilson ($1.1 million) are all 29 or younger and zoom around the ice as if controlled by joysticks. Donovan is playing for his fifth organization because he was unfairly tagged as having a low hockey IQ. He blossomed into an 18-goal scorer and a sturdy checker under Sutter, a role that was enhanced after Calgary acquired Nieminen and Nilson before the trading deadline. Nieminen's accented argot might occasionally need subtitles—"On the road we play hospital hockey: more patients," the Footnote Finn said after the Flames lost Game 3, 3–0, at home—but he is eloquent in his hard work. Nieminen has combined well with Nilson, who had never lived up to expectations as the Florida Panthers' 1996 top draft choice. With a market correction and the economic folly of some of the traditional powers exposed (the six Flames defensemen in this series, none older than 28, make $5.315 million, about as much as the Red Wings, beaten by Calgary in the second round, pay 31-year-old Derian Hatcher), Donovan's line is the NHL's paradigm. "The workers have speed now," says Hitchcock, who turned the Flyers loose in their 6–2 Game 2 win. "Before they were more positional players. Now they're more forechecking, puck-pursuit hounds."

The Sharks were trapping dogs for the first 15 games of the season, but after winning only three times during that stretch, Ron Wilson blew up the schemes and reinvented San Jose. The catalyst was not captain Patrick Marleau, but two players the coach barely knew: speedy Swedish winger Nils Ekman, previously a minor leaguer in the New York Rangers organization, and forward Alexander Korolyuk, who played the 2002–03 season in Russia. "To be honest, I didn't have any plans for Korolyuk when I saw how he wanted to play like a freelancer," says Wilson. "But once Korky started buying in and we saw he could be a speed guy who could make an impact, we changed everything to become a strong forechecking and puck-pursuit team." San Jose attacks with speed but also resorts to sly dump-ins—low shots that rim the boards or soft cross-ice chips—that keep pucks away from goalies and allow the Sharks to initiate a forecheck. With the NHL proposal to limit goalies' handling of the puck next year, the future, whenever that might be, will favor the forecheck. With a payroll around $35 million and owners apparently set on a salary cap in that vicinity, San Jose is ahead of the economic curve, too.

Like wing-tipped brogues, the trap will always have its place. It can be a useful tool in some situations, including late in the game to protect leads, but hockey fashionistas know that styles change. Only a year after the neutral-zone trap reached its apogee in a seven-game slog between Cup winner New Jersey and Anaheim, forechecking is all the rage. The games have gone from full bores to full bore. □

LOU CAPOZZOLA

"Players like our system," says Lightning associate coach Craig Ramsay. "The main word here is *go*."

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Test of the Best

BY AUSTIN MURPHY

TOUCH AND GO As part of the Water Confidence Test, Staff Sgt. Colin Boley had to shinny 45 feet across a rope, hit the sign, then drop 40 feet into Victory Pond.

The U.S. Army Rangers are among the most superbly conditioned athletes in the world, and their Best Ranger Competition is a grueling 60-hour endurance event held annually at Fort Benning, Ga. It had barely begun this year when the news broke that former Arizona Cardinals star Pat Tillman, a Ranger who had trained on the same course, had been killed in action in Afghanistan. The competition was not the same after that, nor was anyone who watched it.

THERE WOULD be heat and humidity, hunger and thirst, darkness and sleep deprivation. There would be barbed-wire cuts and silver-dollar-sized blisters, mosquitoes and 70-plus-pound "ticks," as U.S. Army Rangers call their gear-packed rucksacks ("because they suck the life out of you," one said). We knew all that going into the Best Ranger Competition, the annual three-day sufferfest that is open only to military personnel who have completed the Army's notoriously demanding, 61-day

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE TIEDEMANN/GT IMAGES

Ranger School. Indeed, it's a Cliffs Notes version of that training.

"You do all these disciplines in Ranger School," says 2nd Lieut. Marcus Messerschmitt, who was on the winning team in the 2000 Best Ranger, "you just don't do them in three friggin' days."

If the school is dedicated, as the Army says, to producing "the finest trained soldier in the world," the Best Ranger Competition identifies the elite of the elite. It separates, as Command Sgt. Major Douglas Greenway of the Ranger Training Brigade put it, "the men from the supermen."

In ticking off the laundry list of privations and ordeals endured by participants, no one mentions the briefings preceding each event—the dry, interminable briefings that begin to feel, as they drag on, like endurance events unto themselves. Saturday evening's briefer was Sgt. 1st Class Michael Henry, who, you could tell, was proud of the night navigation course he'd designed. Sprawled on the ground before him in attitudes of abject fatigue were 24 Rangers, operating in teams of two. Unlike Henry, these men were neither clean-shaven nor chipper nor delighted with the navigational riddles the sergeant had devised for them. They were 36 hours into an insanely brutal test that had begun at 6 a.m. the previous day. They'd done sit-ups and push-ups until their guts and arms burned with lactic acid; finished an eight-mile run; parachuted 1,500 feet from a helicopter; borne a stretcher laden with 150 pounds over three hilly miles; paddled themselves and their gear 7½ miles, then donned their water-soaked rucksacks for an 18-mile nocturnal road march that whittled the field to 12 teams from the original 19. That's about half the number of teams that usually compete in this ridiculously tough event. The reason for the light turnout was obvious: There is a war on.

That was driven home after the eight-mile run, when Greenway called together "all you guys from the 75th." Eight Rangers from the 75th Ranger Regiment—the so-called Go to War Rangers, because they are so often the first to be placed in harm's way—gathered round. They came out of the meeting grim-faced: Pat Tillman, who'd graduated from Ranger School last November and was one of their own, had been killed in Afghanistan.

HONOR ROLL Engraved pistols went to first-place finishers Nash and Boley (right), but credit all the teams (below) that finished.

ADAM NASH
Hyannis, Mass.

COLIN BOLEY
Moon Township, Pa.

JOHN SHEAFFER
Milford, Del.

MATTHEW WILSON
Glendale, Ariz.

DAVID BRAGG
Colorado Springs

BRIAN HOFFMAN
Raleigh, N.C.

JOSHUA CARSWELL
Hickory, N.C.

KEVIN O'CONNOR
Flower Mound, Texas

WILLIAM LANGHAM
Arlington, Texas

RANGER

Best Ranger identifies the elite of the elite; it separates, as one instructor put it, THE MEN FROM THE SUPERMEN.

That news, coupled with intensified fighting in Iraq, colored this competition. It deepened spectators' appreciation of how outrageously fit these men are, how committed they are to their jobs, and how dangerous those jobs can be. You could disagree with the war—the Rangers would spill their blood for your right to do that—but it was all but impossible not to respect these warriors.

It was also difficult not to sympathize with them as Sergeant Henry's briefing ranged from the course boundaries to "the medevac plan" to what to do in case of snakebites, bee stings and—the cloudless skies above notwithstanding—lightning. Before bringing his briefing home, he advised the men to "make sure you have a good stretch before you get out there."

They looked dully back at him, intending to do no such thing. "Why stretch now?" grumbled one haggard competitor. "I've already pulled every muscle that I've got."

Finally, the magic words from Henry's lips: "Any questions?"

Sitting cross-legged in pine needles, a shaft of evening sun highlighting the veins on his shaved head, Staff Sgt. Colin Boley kept his peace. But no one would have blamed him if he'd shouted to the treetops: *What the hell am I doing here?*

Boley was supposed to be on leave. While Rangers on other teams had been given Special Duty status, allowing them to do little but train for this ordeal for up to four months, the 28-year-old from Moon Township, Pa., had just returned from a three-month deployment in Afghanistan. While his rivals had gone on long runs and logged serious time in the gym, Boley had been conducting dangerous missions in mountain passes. He'd been home only a few days when the call came from his unit's first sergeant: Would he be interested in doing Best Ranger?

It loomed less than two weeks away. "There's no way I'm in any kind of shape to even attempt it," said Boley, who finished 13th in the competition in '98 and 2nd in 2000. Nevertheless, he signed on anyway. It helped that he could team up with his old buddy Adam Nash, a 27-year-old staff sergeant in the 75th. With a partner like Nash, a bright guy and a great athlete who had competed in the 2002 Best Ranger, Boley thought they could win. Still, the question remains: Why would he postpone two weeks of R&R to take on this additional suffering?

The truth is, he likes it. He needs it. One fine spring day in his senior year of high school, Boley signed up to see the Army recruiter in the library, then blew off the meeting. "It was just an excuse to get out of class," says Boley, who was surprised to be paid a home recruiting visit after graduation. I'm not interested, Boley told the man at his door. The recruiter persisted.

He was trying to sign Boley up for the Army National Guard. "If I'm going to do this," said Boley, just wanting to be rid of the man, "I'm going to do it right." A few days later, a stranger came knocking—the active-duty recruiter. "He was a good guy," says Boley, "and he got me to say yes."

Whether he was skipping a high school chemistry test (because he knew he could get a zero and still pass the course) or organizing a scavenger hunt with his buddies (they would fan out in five cars all over Moon Township, some of whose citizens would arise the next morning to find their garden gnomes had gone AWOL), Boley had not always responded well to authority. "If you would just use this evil for good," his mother joked, "you could be really special."

She was right. Boley took to the Army. After a year in Hawaii, he went to Ranger School, at which he first crossed paths with Nash, a lanky, handsome Cape Codder with a Yankee aversion to debt. Unnerved while in high school by the thought of taking out huge loans for his higher education, Nash saw an Army advertisement offering $25,000 for college.

"I thought, That's a great idea," he says. At his recruiter's office, he watched a video of the Rangers. "I was thinking, That looks like gym class; it looks like fun," he recalls. "Of course they don't show the hard parts."

SIMON BRUTY (8)

BRENT MYERS
Mingo Junction, Ohio

PAUL STAEHELI
Lakewood, Wash.

JOHN SERAFINI
Boston

CORBETT MCCALLUM
Avoca, N.Y.

JEFFREY LEWIS
Murrieta, Calif.

ERIC BUONOPANE
Manchester, N.H.

ROBERT OSSMAN
Garnerville, N.Y.

RANGER

Reality intruded at times at this year's competition as mothers wept for joy and FATHERS REMEMBERED LOST SONS.

He signed on for three years and loved it. Nash has since reenlisted twice and is now in his ninth year as a Ranger.

Boley and Nash started slowly in this year's competition, finishing 13th in the first event, a timed test in which each of the contestants knocks out as many push-ups and sit-ups as he can in a pair of two-minute sessions. As the sun rose over southwestern Georgia, the two redeemed themselves with a third-place finish in the Unknown Distance Run, which is seldom more than five miles but this year went eight-plus. That early-morning constitutional ended near the 300-meter-long shooting range where the next event would be contested. Expansive and well-manicured, this venue called to mind a driving range, until moving targets began popping up and the Rangers started firing at them. (The targets, shaped like soldiers, were known during the cold war and for years after as Ivan, and sported on their foreheads red stars—long since painted over.)

Heavily favored in this event were the four teams with members from the 4th Ranger Training Battalion, based at Fort Benning. This was, in essence, their home field. Yet, when the shooting stopped, the home teams had been upset. Nash and Boley had won.

Up next was the Spot Jump, in which the Rangers parachuted toward a circular target from a low-flying helicopter—"Your door!" the jump master shouted, and out they piled—followed by the event that "flat-out ate 'em up," as Greenway put it. Part of the Ranger Creed, by which the contestants live, says, "I will never leave a fallen comrade." The Litter Carry tests whether or not they'll be able to back up that promise. As they embarked, no one figured they'd be humping their unwieldy, gear-laden stretchers more than a half mile. On this sticky, 80°-plus day, they carried the litters over hill and dale for more than three miles. Seasoned veterans of Best Ranger could not remember a more difficult, puke-inducing first morning. "A complete smokefest," is how one competitor, Capt. John Serafini, described it.

Such words were ambrosia to Maj. Michael McNally, who designed this year's competition. Every year, he said, Best Ranger "makes huge physical demands, but it's also very mentally demanding, which is why you rarely see young guys finish. You have to push through so many levels of pain."

As Nash and Boley pushed through their next level of pain, a 7½-mile canoe paddle on muddy, shallow and charmless Upatoi Creek, they glided beneath McBride's Bridge, from which a familiar voice floated down to them. "Colin, your mommy loves you!" cried Lynne Boley, who along with her husband, Peter Slavic, had made the drive from Pittsburgh.

Boley glanced up just in time to hear Eddie Noland chime in. Sgt. 1st Class Noland, also from the 75th, is a 6' 3" Ranger with a sinister-looking scar on his neck and lats that fan out like the fins of a stingray. "I love you too," he trilled, before adding—less tenderly, in his normal voice—"Now keep paddling."

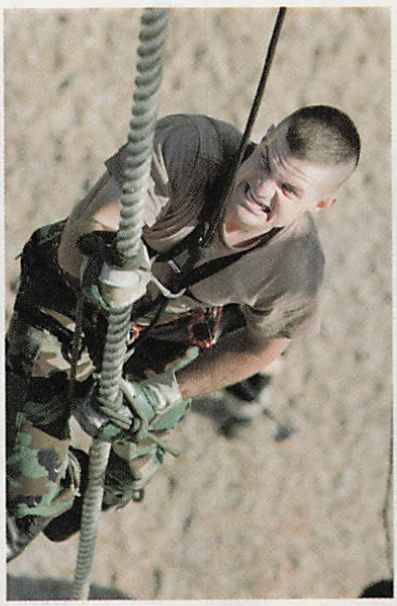
After helping drag his canoe out of the water, Boley stood near his mother, who was separated from her son by a ribbon of yellow tape. It was torturing her. "I just want a hug," she said. She had not laid eyes on her boy since he had left for Afghanistan.

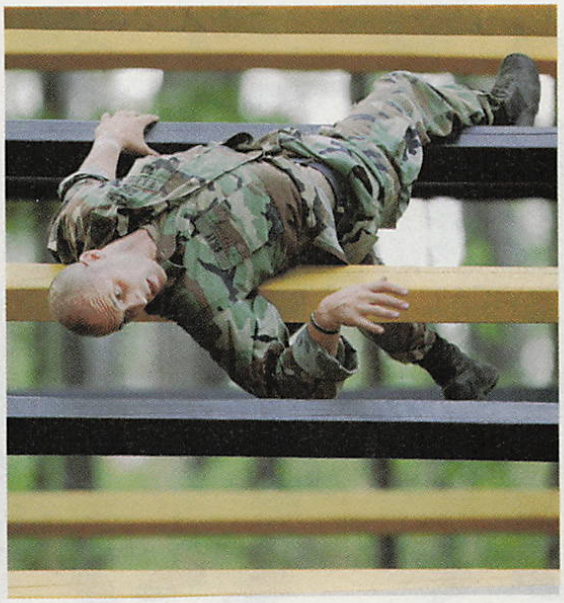
"Aww, Ma," said Colin. But even as he said it, he leaned over the tape and embraced her for a long time. When he was gone, Lynne Boley sat on the gravel and cried quietly. "I'm upset, but it's a good upset," she explained. "I'm just so happy to see him."

As their suffering intensified, the emotions of the competitors likewise crept closer to the surface. Swarming over the course was an army of RIs (Ranger Instructors), who in their black T-shirts looked like nightclub bouncers. The moment Nash got the rucksack off his back, a pair of RIs tried to take it from him. It's their job to weigh the packs, to make sure they were sufficiently heavy. Seriously.

But Nash wanted something from his pack and snapped at the RIs for being "grabby." They silently absorbed the criticism. "Reg-

GAME FACES Hoffman grimaced in the Prusik Climb, the Darby Queen gave Boley a royal pain, and Sheaffer endured the Distance Run.





BOB ROSATO (3)

"Why stretch now?" grumbled one haggard competitor. "I've ALREADY PULLED EVERY MUSCLE that I've got."

iment guys," said one to the other when Nash was gone. "That's just how they are."

This brief bit of friction hints at a broader discord. The cold truth is, some of the regiment guys look down their noses at their colleagues in the RTB (Ranger Training Brigade), who, as instructors at Ranger School, don't go into combat. Of course, most, if not all, of them saw combat earlier in their careers, but they're no longer deployed overseas. "Guys in the regiment have to be prepared to pack up and leave home in a minute," said Noland, a Best Ranger veteran who was coaching the teams from the 75th. "These guys out here"—from the RTB—"are going to college at night. Nothing against them, they've got an awesome responsibility. But regiment guys have to maintain their edge all the time 'cause if they don't, they're going to lose."

He wasn't talking about the Best Ranger competition.

Regiment guys had plenty of edge at this year's Best Ranger. At dusk on Friday, Nash and Boley held a narrow lead over another team from the 75th (Staff Sgt. John Sheaffer and Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Wilson, of whom another Ranger said, "Do you have any idea what a badass that guy is?"), but how long would that last? Nash had been suffering from tendinitis in his left shin, and Boley's duty in Afghanistan was bound to catch up with him. Ahead lay the day's supreme ordeal, the Foot March, an 18-or-so-mile slog in combat boots, with a 70-pound rucksack, that had to be completed in six hours or less. It would shuffle the standings but good.

The team that won the Foot March would be given a trophy, a life-sized, bronze Army boot. The award is named for Russell B. Rippetoe, a Ranger who was killed by a suicide bomber on April 3, 2003, on a highway near the Haditha Dam, in central Iraq. The boot sat on a table in the foyer of the RTB headquarters, not far from the finish line of the march. Hovering around the trophy in the early morning hours before the leaders came in was a short, compact, gray-haired man with a military bearing. The name tag pinned to his blazer said Rippetoe.

Three things have helped Joe Rippetoe cope with the death of his only son: antidepressants; his relationship, as he says, with the man upstairs; and the 75th Ranger Regiment, to which Russell belonged. Joe is a retired Army lieutenant colonel who did two tours of duty in Vietnam. Spending time around members of Russ's regiment seems to be therapeutic for him, as is talking about his son. Unprompted, Joe recalled the worst morning of his life. "It was still O-dark out," he says. "Three Rangers knocked at my door. When I came down the stairs, I looked out the window and saw them there. My heart. . . ." He stops, takes a breath and goes on. Upon his return from Vietnam, he explains, he was sometimes called upon to deliver to families the news that their loved one had been killed. "It's hard for those guys too," says Joe. "So when they came in, I said, 'You don't have to tell me. I know.' "

In this way Best Ranger is nothing like any other endurance event—an Eco-Challenge, Ironman, you name it. Sure, the athletes suffer similarly (although it would be fascinating to see Peter Reid, the reigning Ironman champ, try to get around Kona in combat boots). But here at Fort Benning during wartime, reality periodically intruded, in the form of mothers weeping for joy and fathers remembering lost sons.

The Foot March was won by a pair of captains from the U.S. Maneuver Support Center, based in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Brian Hoffman and David Bragg finished in four hours, 50 minutes and seemed so cheerful and fresh as they came into view, you half expected them to whistle and skip the last quarter mile. While they were hustled off to the next event—a series of mental tests called Night Stakes—Hoffman's wife, Jordan, approached Joe Rippetoe.

"Brian was a friend of Russ's," she said. "This means so much to him."

DOWN TIME Lewis (top left) and McCallum plotted their Night Nav course, McCallum alighted in the Spot Jump, and Boley lay low.

BOB ROSATO (BOTTOM LEFT); SIMON BRUTY (2)

RANGER

NO REST FOR THE WEARY

An hour-by-hour look at the Best Ranger schedule shows that sleep is not among the priorities

FRIDAY

0600–0715: Physical Training: push-ups, sit-ups, followed by . . . push-ups, sit-ups.

0730–0900: Unknown Distance Run (which this year turned out to be eight miles).

0945–1230: M4 Record Fire: Rangers lower themselves into a prone position and fire at moving targets. (Performance in early events determines the order in which teams undertake the Spot Jump, the Litter Carry and the canoe run. In Best Ranger, says Sgt. 1st Class Eric White, who was a winner in the '95 competition, "The sleep you get is the sleep you earn." In other words, the earlier you finish, the more shut-eye you can stockpile.)

1025–1545: As contestants finish on the range, they begin to board helicopters for the Spot Jump, in which they try to parachute into a chalk circle some 50 feet in diameter, a task made more difficult by winds gusting up to 15 mph. (Only one team lands both men in the circle.)

1145–1640: Litter Carry, in which Rangers hump a 150-pound load 3½ miles over hilly terrain.

1210–1810: 7½-mile canoe paddle on Upatoi Creek, the shallowness of which requires numerous draggings and portages.

2000–2400: Foot March, 18-plus miles in full gear. Knocks out more teams than any other event. Teams must finish in six hours.

SATURDAY

0000–0200 Foot March continues. Those who drop out, or exceed the time limit, face the ignominy of a long, slow ride in the Rangers' version of a "broom truck," which sweeps up the stragglers.

0300–0700: Night Stakes. A series of mental tests—demolition, vehicle identification, radio operation, to name a few. Just what you want when cross-eyed from exhaustion and sleep deprivation.

0730–1730: Day Stakes. Spectator-friendly series of events (including Claymore mine installation, weapons assembly, military knots and Prusik Climb).

1830–2400: Orienteering. Night Navigation. Toughest event of the competition.

SUNDAY

0000–0630 Night Nav continues.

0700–1100: Darby Queen, infamous course whose 26 obstacles include something called Dirty Name. Leaves every Ranger splayed in the dirt sucking wind.

0900–1300: Water Confidence Test and Helocast.

1600–1700: Buddy Run. Two and a half miles in Army boots, carrying a fake rifle, in broiling sun. No wonder they had an ambulance following these guys.

The rest of the marchers straggled in for the next hour, stooped under the weight of their rucks, limping on horrendously blistered feet. "Well, that sucked again," was the sour conclusion of one Best Ranger veteran who came across in 5½ hours.

Only 12 teams had finished by the 2 a.m. deadline. By virtue of their second-place finish, Sheaffer and Wilson wrested first place from Nash and Boley, who came in more than 40 minutes behind the winners, in 10th place, looking knackered and grim. It had been a courageous effort, but what had made Boley think he could compete in this event without proper training? The question now was not whether he and Nash would win but whether they would finish.

"It's early," said Messerschmitt, the 2000 winner. "This was just Winston Cup qualifying. Tomorrow night is the real race."

Before the "real race"—night navigation—the remaining teams were subjected to 15 hours of mental and physical tests, a smorgasbord of events, some of which had more to do with soldiering (vehicle identification, weapons assembly, Claymore mine installation) than others (archery, tomahawk throw, military knots).

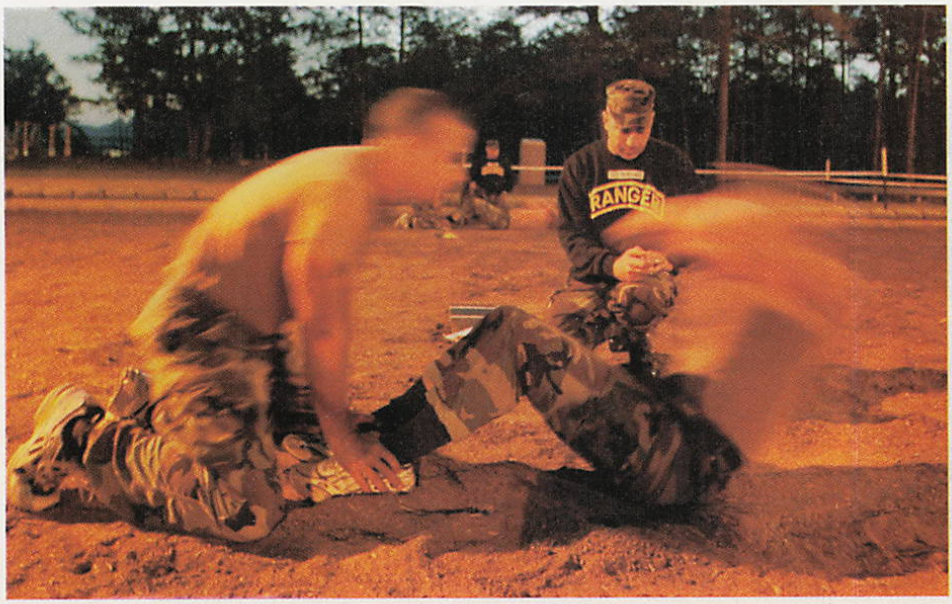
Saturday's events took place on or near Todd Field and drew an appreciative crowd of current and former Rangers. Competitors were allowed brief exchanges with their families. Before he entered the knot-tying venue, there to do battle with the clove hitch, the figure-eight slip, the bowline on a coil, Boley chatted with Slavic, his stepdad.

"Where'd you guys eat last night?"

"Barbecue place over by the Wal-Mart. Where'd you eat?"

Boley smiled weakly. He had dined, on his duff in the dirt, on an MRE (meal ready to eat), one of the seven that had been

SKILL SETS Things began benignly with sit-ups, but before long Nash (top right) had to test his swimming and Bragg couldn't go unbowed.



SIMON BRUTY (LEFT); BOB ROSATO (TOP); GEORGE TIEDEMANN/GT IMAGES

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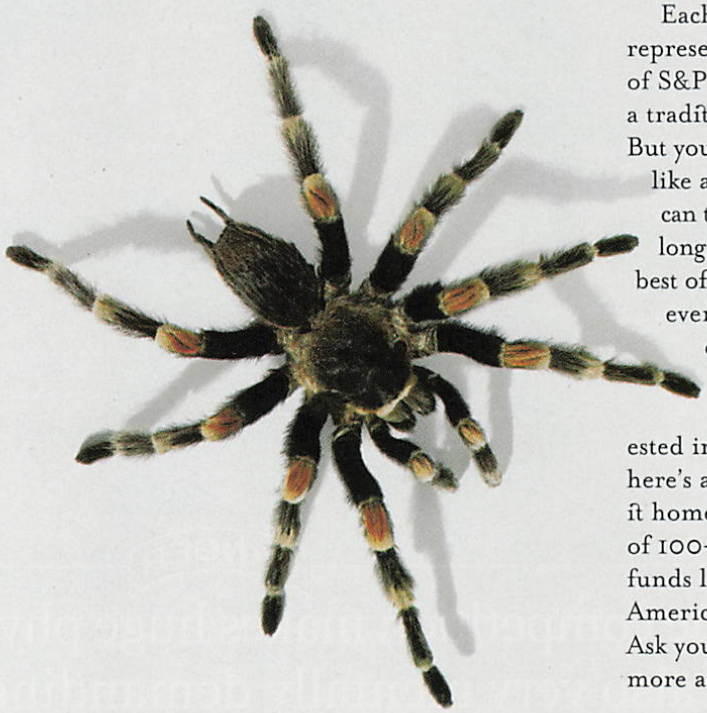

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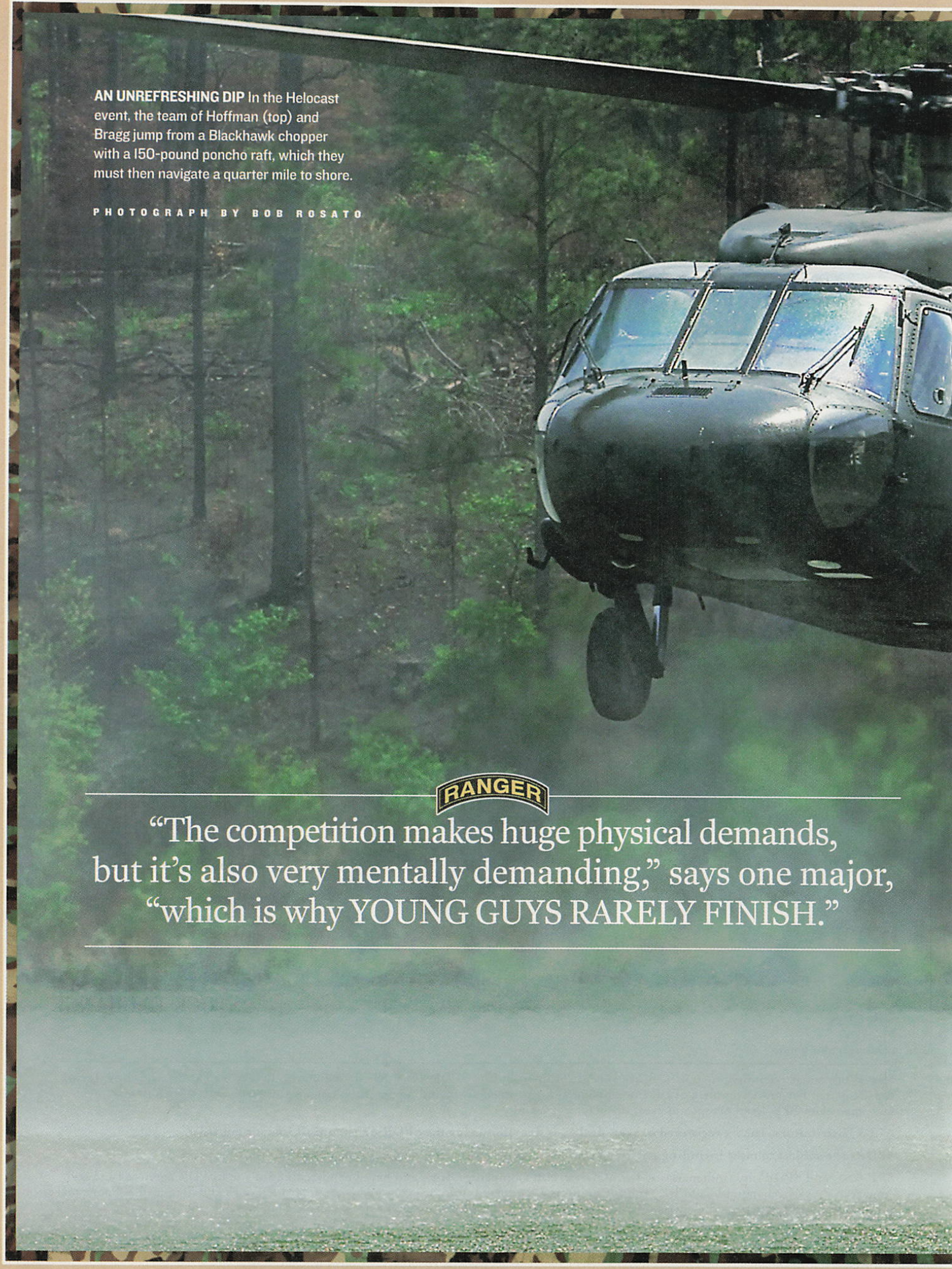

AN UNREFRESHING DIP In the Helocast event, the team of Hoffman (top) and Bragg jump from a Blackhawk chopper with a 150-pound poncho raft, which they must then navigate a quarter mile to shore.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB ROSATO

RANGER

"The competition makes huge physical demands, but it's also very mentally demanding," says one major, "which is why YOUNG GUYS RARELY FINISH."

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"I JUST WANT A HUG," said Boley's mother, Lynne, who had not laid eyes on her son since he had left for Afghanistan.

allotted to each competitor for the entire three-day ordeal.

"Hey, I got some cold ones," said Slavic. "Call me anytime, I'll come pick you up."

They both knew he was kidding. Nash and Boley had recovered from their nightmarish march and held their own throughout Saturday's events. After the crowd-pleasing Prusik Climb—a fast ascent up a 60-foot tower, followed by a faster rappel down the other side—they'd settled into second place, with 440 points. They trailed Wilson and Sheaffer by 35 points. Night Nav was next.

WHEN SERGEANT HENRY arrived, at last, at the end of his briefing, the Rangers donned their rucksacks, took about 20 paces, then dropped their packs on the ground and sat back down. Before they could embark on the course, they needed to plot the checkpoints, using coordinates provided with the maps.

"We're in the lead," said Wilson as he lay on his stomach in a pine forest, plotting away. "It's time to cowboy up." But the forest at night plays tricks on even the savviest Rangers. Take Nash and Boley. Despite walking eight miles out of their way and wasting 2½ hours in a futile attempt to earn a bonus point, they realized they were not far off the lead when they encountered several other teams still on the course. Newly encouraged, Nash says, "at that point we stepped it up, kicked it in the ass, found a couple of shortcuts and ended up passing all those teams."

What they were doing was carving out a permanent place for themselves in Best Ranger lore. With Nash ignoring his tendinitis and Boley tapping into some hidden reserves, the pair finished Night Nav in a three-way tie for first. Wilson and Sheaffer barely made the 12-hour cutoff, staggering in with just 15 minutes to spare. Four more teams dropped out. Going into the final day, two teams were tied for first: Wilson-Sheaffer and Nash-Boley.

Sunday was a dogfight. Nash and Boley bested their rivals in the Darby Queen, a devilish, 1½-mile obstacle course, then finished ahead of them in the Water Confidence Test, which entailed, among other challenges, walking 40 feet across an eight-inch beam 45 feet over the water. Most Rangers negotiated the beam as if taking a field sobriety test; Boley loped across as if out for a jog.

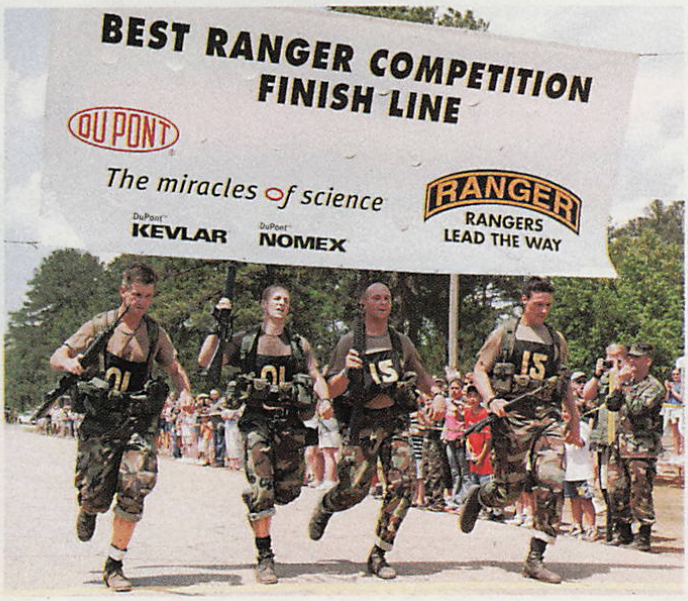
In the penultimate event, the Helocast, competitors jump from a low-flying helicopter into a lake, then swim—while pulling their packs, which are encased in "poncho rafts" of their own making—a quarter mile to shore. Rallying valiantly, Wilson and Sheaffer won, and it was official: The 21st annual Best Ranger Competition would be decided by the final event.

Its cheery name, the Buddy Run, belies its cruelty: a 2½-mile test, in boots, carrying an ersatz rifle, after all of the misery that preceded it. Wilson and Sheaffer went out hard, but they couldn't lose Nash and Boley, who needed only a third-place finish to win it all. And so the four of them ran the final mile together, crossing the line with rifles upraised, covering themselves, and the 75th Regiment, in glory. There was Noland, a tough guy's tough guy, trying to keep the emotion out of his voice as he said, "That might be the prettiest thing I've ever seen."

After embracing his parents, Boley found himself face to face with Joe Rippetoe. The two have formed an especially strong bond since Russ was killed. Boley and Russ were good friends. Boley's wife, Amy, used to try to set Russ up with her girlfriends. The two Rangers were born, eerily, on the same day, and Boley wasn't that far away when a pregnant woman ran out of a car screaming for help, luring Russ to his death as the woman's companion blew up the vehicle.

Boley held the older man in his arms for a long time. Afterward, Joe Rippetoe steadied himself against the trunk of a tree until his vision cleared. "It's a privilege being around these guys," he said. "They are the best of the best." □

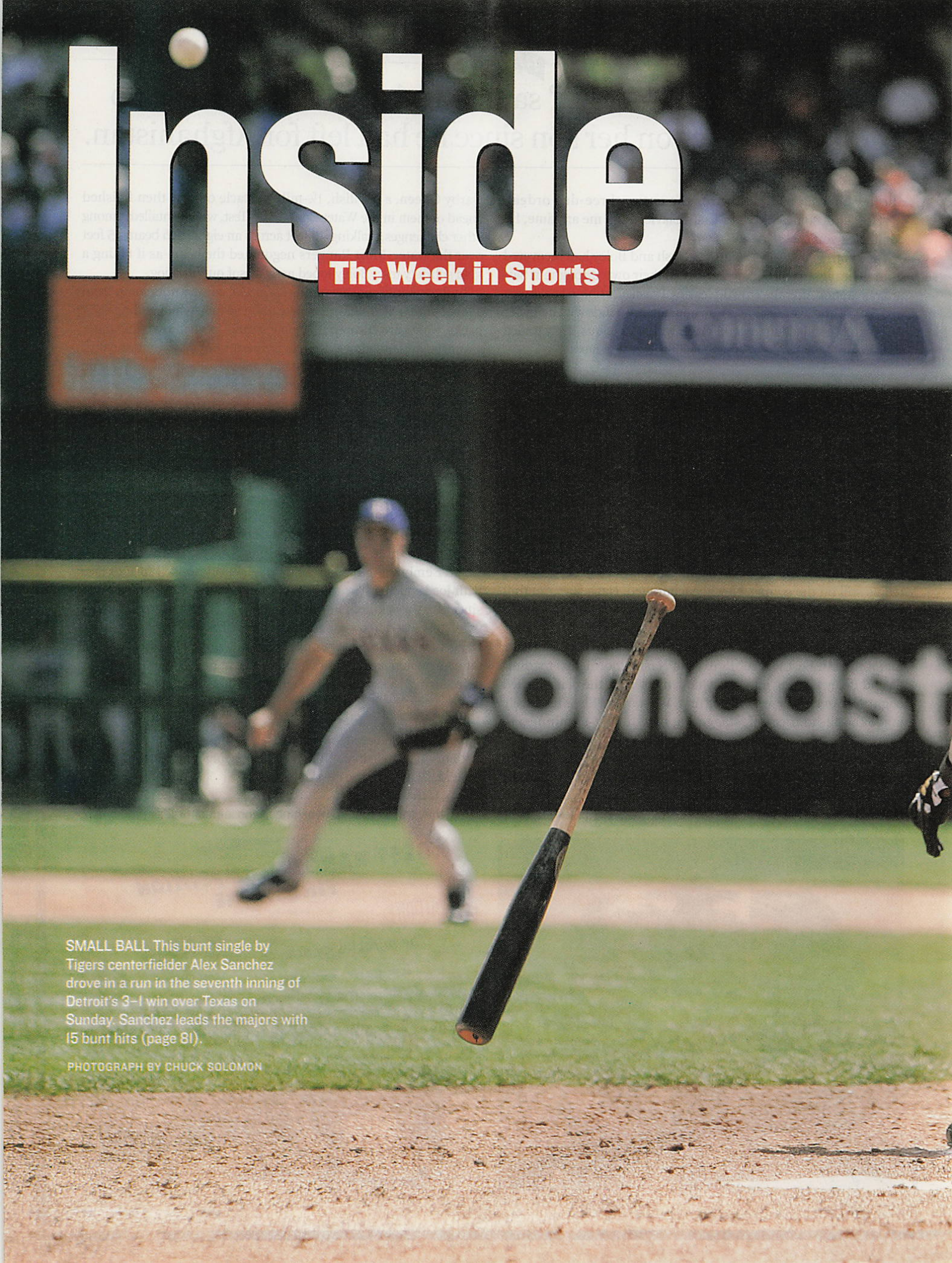
HARD SLOG Despite the dogged efforts of Ossman (far left) and Buonopane, they trailed the top twosomes, who joined forces at the finish.



BOB ROSATO (2)

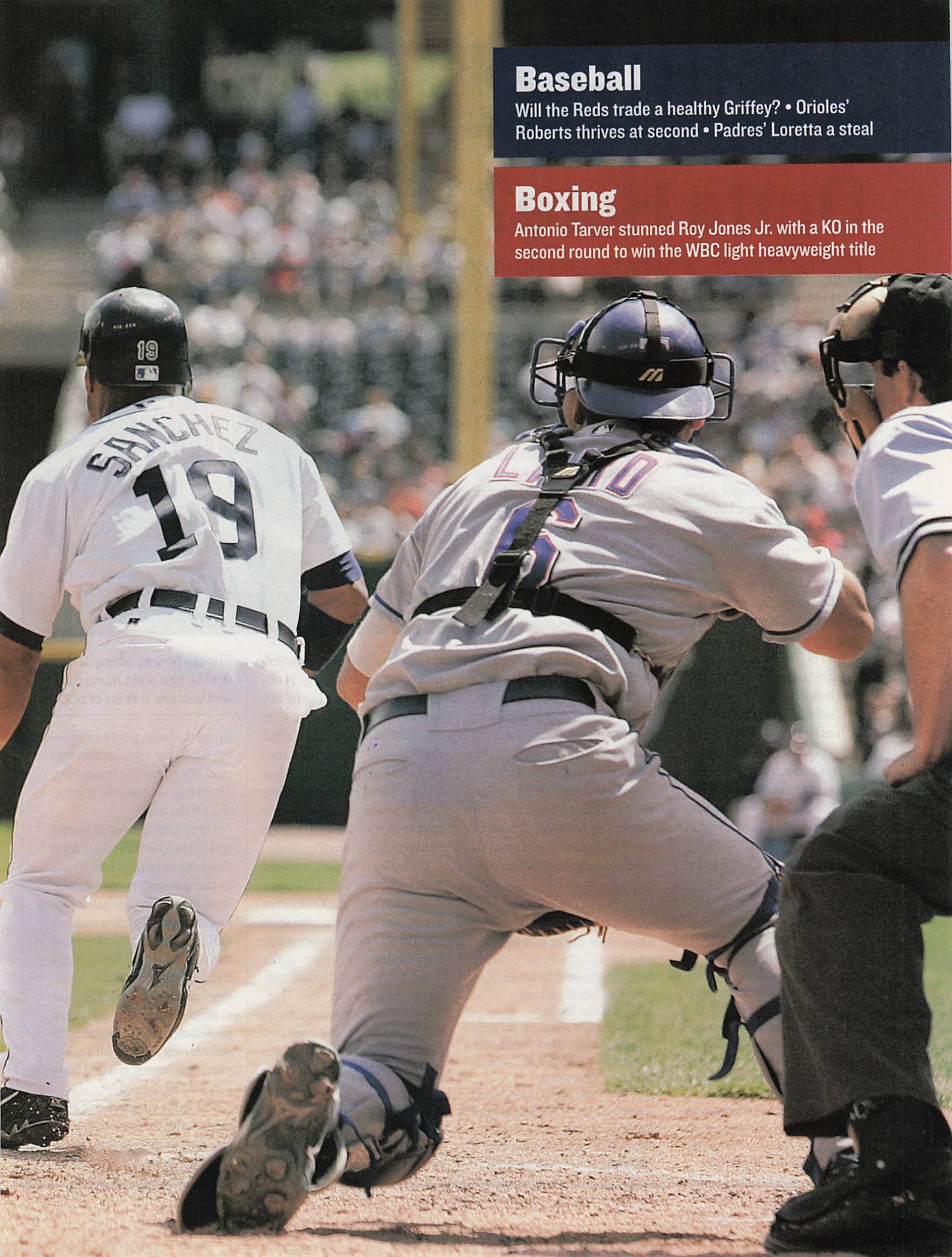
Inside

The Week in Sports



SMALL BALL This bunt single by Tigers centerfielder Alex Sanchez drove in a run in the seventh inning of Detroit's 3–1 win over Texas on Sunday. Sanchez leads the majors with 15 bunt hits (page 81).

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHUCK SOLOMON



Baseball

Will the Reds trade a healthy Griffey? • Orioles' Roberts thrives at second • Padres' Loretta a steal

Boxing

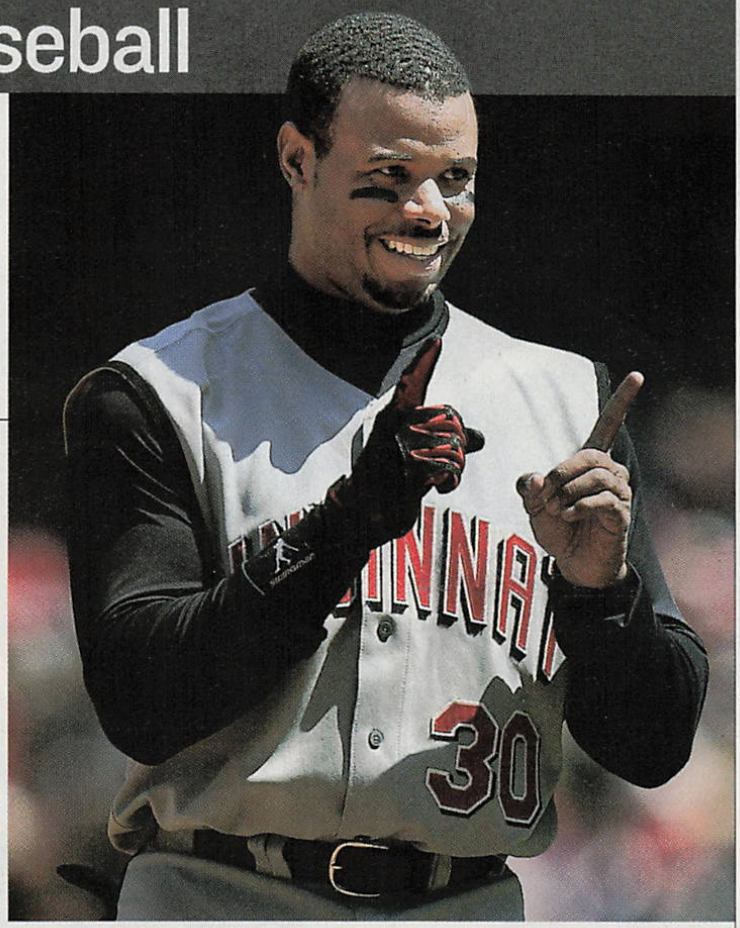
Antonio Tarver stunned Roy Jones Jr. with a KO in the second round to win the WBC light heavyweight title

Inside Baseball

Outta Here?

Ken Griffey Jr. is healthy and hitting homers—so will the Reds trade him?

by Albert Chen



Though he was hitting .248, Griffey had eight home runs and was just 11 short of 500.

AL TIELEMANS

HE KNOWS he's not the Kid he once was, the backward-hat-wearing free spirit who moved so easily around the field. These days the periodic sting in his right shoulder and in his right ankle, both surgically repaired last summer, remind Ken Griffey Jr. that, at 34, he is, in his words, "no spring chicken." But Griffey also knows that he is finally getting over the injuries that limited him to a career-low 53 games in 2003. "The aches are less and less as days go by," he says.

Griffey's stats through Sunday were unspectacular (he was hitting .248 with eight homers), but pitchers beware: The 11-time All-Star centerfielder is heating up. Griffey's two-run homer last Saturday night in the Reds' 4–0 win over Los Angeles was his fifth in nine games and brought him to within 11 of 500. "With the time he's missed, it's still going to take him time to get all the way back," says Cincinnati G.M. Dan O'Brien. "The player you see now and the one you'll see in August will be very different."

That Griffey has been a fixture in the Reds' lineup this year is significant. Not since 2000, his first season in Cincinnati, had Griffey gone through April without a trip to the disabled list. His continued good health could set the stage for an intriguing summer for the only active position player voted to baseball's All-Century team.

It's no secret that the Reds would like to rid themselves of Griffey's contract; he has five years remaining on the nine-year, $116.5 million deal he signed in February 2000. Before the 2003 season, then Cincinnati G.M. Jim Bowden had a trade in place that would have sent Griffey to San Diego for third baseman Phil Nevin, but Nevin used his no-trade clause to block the deal. (Griffey doesn't have such a clause in his contract.) O'Brien says Griffey's name hasn't come up in discussions with other teams this year but acknowledges that Griffey could be moved, especially if the Reds (20–17 at week's end) fall out of contention. "We lost 93 games last year," says O'Brien. "As the season progresses, we do have to be open-minded on ways to improve this team."

If Griffey is traded, it would end a marriage that has been a failure for both the Cincinnati native and the Reds, who were just 318–367 since acquiring him from Seattle in February 2000. "Most people [in Cincinnati] wish all the best for me," says Griffey, who has spent more days on the DL (200) in the past two seasons than on the Reds' active roster (170). "But the ones who come to the ballpark and yell at me, they don't get that I'm more frustrated than anyone else. It's been tough with all these injuries. [But] I've never done anything to disrespect anyone—my family, the organization, anyone. My name has never been associated with anything negative off the field."

Given Griffey's recent history and his hefty contract, any team that tries to acquire him would be taking a considerable risk. "You need to see him play half a year healthy at least to know that he's O.K.," says an executive from the Mariners, which during spring training was rumored to be interested in bringing Griffey back to Seattle. "Even if the Reds picked up half of [Griffey's contract], it's still a bunch of money. It's a five-year commitment, and he'd be 39 years old by the end."

For now, Griffey isn't concerned with the trade rumors or anything more than just staying healthy. The run of injuries hasn't

Three Up

Alex Rodriguez, 3B, Yankees
Since April 18, when he was hitting .156, A-Rod has returned to form: .350 with eight homers, 17 RBIs and 19 runs scored.

Ben Sheets, RHP, Brewers
In a dominating performance on Sunday, the 25-year-old Sheets struck out 18 and and scattered three hits in a complete-game 4–1 win over the Braves.

Wilson Alvarez, LHP, Dodgers
Moved into the rotation from the bullpen to spark the staff, the 34-year-old Alvarez was unhittable in his first two starts (0 ER, 13 Ks in 14⅔ innings).

Three Down

Aubrey Huff, DH/3B, Devil Rays
After hitting .311 with 34 homers in 2003, he was batting .211 with just eight extra-base hits this season.

Bobby Crosby, SS, A's
Miguel Tejada's successor has been dreadful, hitting .221 and leading the AL in strikeout rate (every 3.3 at bats).

Robb Nen, RHP, Giants
Nen, who hasn't pitched since having shoulder surgery in 2002, announced that he was shutting himself down from baseball activity for a month, leading to speculation that he might soon retire.

dampened his drive, and he says he doesn't linger on the what-ifs of his lost seasons. He knows he has a lot of baseball ahead of him. "The past doesn't do me any good now," Griffey says. "The most important thing for me is to make the best of today. To me, that's the only thing that counts."

Baltimore's Brian Roberts

Earning His Wings at Second

Orioles teammates Brian Roberts and Jerry Hairston Jr. are friends and off-season workout partners. As their names cropped up in trade rumors last winter—both play second base—they swapped the latest gossip every day, laughing at their predicament. "There was no animosity, no resentment," says Roberts. "We both understand it's part of the game."

When Hairston broke his right ring finger on a headfirst slide in Baltimore's first spring training game, the second base gridlock was temporarily avoided, and Roberts has excelled in Hairston's absence. Through Sunday he was batting .283 with a .344 on-base percentage, had stolen 16 bases in 18 attempts and was fifth in the AL with 29 runs scored. Hairston was activated from the disabled list on May 11, but getting him regular at bats will require some creativity.

"Brian has done a hell of a job for us at second base, and I can't take him out of the lineup because he's earned it," says Orioles manager Lee Mazzilli. "It's going to be a juggling act."

Hairston, who had three hits in 18 at bats through Sunday, has mostly batted ninth and has been the designated hitter, though last Saturday he volunteered to play leftfield. "He caught the balls he needed to catch," Mazzilli says. "I'm not looking for him to be Willie Mays."

When Roberts and Hairston are both in the lineup, Baltimore has base stealing threats at both ends of the order. At week's end the Orioles led the majors in stolen bases (35) and stolen-base percentage (.814). "[Roberts and Hairston] can be disruptive," Mazzilli says, pointing out that third baseman Melvin Mora, who bats second, is enjoying the best power run of his career (.594 slugging percentage and a team-high seven home runs) partially because he's seeing more fastballs. Though Hairston is not a prototypical DH, Mazzilli believes there's enough power in the middle of the order to compensate.

There's a strong probability that either Roberts or Hairston will be traded because several contending teams (the Yankees, the Phillies and the A's, among others) have underperforming second basemen and there aren't many other good candidates on the market. (Montreal's Jose Vidro, assumed to be available at the trade deadline, last week signed a four-year, $30 million extension with the Expos.) But the uncertainty isn't fazing Roberts or Hairston. "Everybody wants to play his natural position and play every day," Roberts says, "but in the world of professional sports that's not always possible."

—Daniel G. Habib

Roberts has sparked the Orioles with 16 stolen bases and 29 runs scored.

Tom Verducci's View

Loretta

SAN DIEGO STEAL

The Padres thought they were on the verge of signing infielder **Edgardo Alfonzo** after the 2002 season, only to see San Francisco snag him with a four-year, $26 million deal. San Diego then settled for **Mark Loretta**, giving him an under-the-radar, one-year deal worth just $1.25 million. The Padres wound up with the better player—with surprisingly more pop—at a fraction of the cost.

Loretta, 32, who had hit 31 homers in eight seasons before joining San Diego, has emerged as one of the NL's top second basemen while outplaying Alfonzo, 30, the third baseman the Giants mistakenly thought could replace **Jeff Kent** as lineup protection for **Barry Bonds**. Alfonzo has nosedived, first reporting to the team last year out of shape and, according to a team source, missing his New York–based family. He has homered once in 117 at bats this year. Says an NL manager, "He has no life in his body."

Here's how Alfonzo and Loretta have fared over the past two seasons.

	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	AVG
Alfonzo	176	631	66	166	14	93	.263
Loretta	192	743	97	230	17	93	.310

A HIT IS A HIT

Sanchez

Alex Sanchez played his way out of Milwaukee last year by resisting the small-ball game, which cleared the way for **Scott Podsednik** to take his centerfield and leadoff spots and earned Podsednik a contract extension. Given another chance in Detroit, Sanchez is reviving the lost art of bunting. Through Sunday he was batting .356 and had 15 bunt hits—no one else in the majors had more than five—including three in one game on May 11 that prompted Oakland manager **Ken Macha** to call him "the best [bunter] I've ever seen."

Lidge

CLOSE CALL

Marlins manager **Jack McKeon** was bold enough to switch closers on the fly last September, taking the job from **Braden Looper** and giving it to **Ugueth Urbina**. Astros manager **Jimy Williams** may face a similar decision. Reliever **Brad Lidge** has better stuff and command than the closer he's setting up, **Octavio Dotel**, who blew a win for **Roger Clemens** on Sunday. Righthanders have almost no chance against Lidge's 91-mph slider and 97-mph fastball. They were 4 for 37 with an astonishing 26 strikeouts at week's end. Says Houston catcher **Brad Ausmus**, "People try to cheat on [the fastball], and that slider just disappears on them. There's no doubt he has closer's stuff. The only thing he lacks is [ninth-inning] experience."

COMMISSIONER FOR A DAY

Wagner

What would be atop his to-do list if Phillies closer **Billy Wagner** had **Bud Selig's** job for 24 hours? "I'd get rid of QuesTec. The umpire's job is hard enough that he shouldn't have to worry about how a machine would call pitches. I wish every fan could get behind the plate just once to see how hard it is to judge a ball moving that fast. It's way harder than it looks on TV."

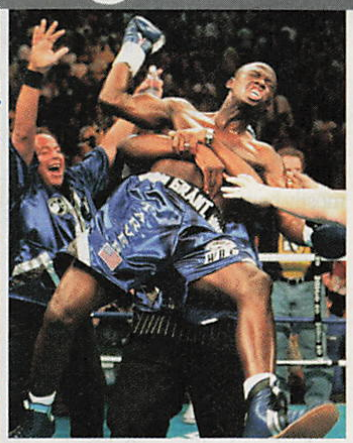
THREE STRIKES

1. The Marlins will be getting the kind of premier pitching help next month that contenders shop for every midseason. Righthander **A.J. Burnett**, once considered to have stuff equal to or better than that of fellow righty **Josh Beckett**, is on track to return in early June, 14 months after undergoing Tommy John surgery.

2. There is one place for instant replay in baseball: getting calls right on home run balls. New parks, with fan-friendly seating and irregular shaped walls, make such calls increasingly difficult for umpires.

3. It's the end of the Braves as we know them. No National League team had fewer wins from its starters at week's end than Atlanta, which had just eight in 36 games.

NICKWASS/AP (ROBERTS); JOHN BAZEMORE/AP (LORETTA); CHUCK SOLOMON (SANCHEZ, WAGNER); REX BROWN/WIREIMAGE.COM (LIDGE)



Jones took a seat at 1:41 of the second round, putting Tarver in a state of delirium.

Lights Out

Antonio Tarver took Roy Jones's title with a stunning Round 2 KO

by Richard Hoffer

THERE WAS a sustained roar, equal parts delight and surprise, as Roy Jones Jr. collapsed to the canvas, flat on his back. The suddenness of it, for one thing, was breathtaking—a single punch, out of the blue, a looping left hand that Jones, certainly, never saw. On the button. But also contributing to the turbo-strength clamor of the crowd at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas last Saturday was the quick recognition that boxing's most entertaining condition, instant chaos, once more prevailed.

It happened halfway through the second round of Jones's rematch with Antonio Tarver, a respected light heavyweight who had flown under Jones's radar for years. Even after Tarver lost a majority decision to Jones in November, a fight many thought Tarver had won, he remained relegated to wannabe status. Jones, who has been carrying the best-fighter-pound-for-pound mantle on his shoulders for a decade, was given the champion's seemingly automatic exemption: Something—*whatever*—had gone wrong. Perhaps Jones, who had joined the heavyweight ranks in March 2003 to casually pick off a title there, was debilitated by the 25-pound weight loss the match with Tarver required.

Tarver, 35 (the same age as Jones), has labored without much prestige, fighting, as he said last week, "along the back roads of Philadelphia, fighting at the Blue Horizon for peanuts." Two losses in his first 23 bouts didn't help, but he's always deserved more than peanuts (he recently filed for bankruptcy) and excuses from beaten opponents. So during ring introductions at the Mandalay, when referee Jay Nady asked if either boxer had any questions, Tarver snarled and said, "You got any excuses tonight, Roy?"

The fight was too short to say Jones has finally and instantly become an old fighter or that Tarver succeeds him on the throne as boxing's best. But the course of the last two fights suggests, at least, that Tarver has Jones's number.

In this second one Jones seemed in charge, as usual, pecking away in the middle of the ring. But Tarver had been instructed not to be dazzled by Jones's fantastic hand speed and instead to reply with force. He should just *do* something, not stand in awe. Here's what he did: As Jones prepared to unveil a characteristic riff (he shot out a punch, prelude to some wonderful combination, no doubt), Tarver responded with a quick left. "Turned out to be shorter than his," explained Tarver, "right on the kisser."

Jones fell, stumbled to his knees, rolled to his side and finally arose at the count of nine but not in good enough shape that Nady believed the fight could go on.

Tarver, whose gift for highly annoying gab is what lured Jones into a fight in the first place, was able to summarize the action with a 1950s kind of brio: "The script can only be written in the squared circle." Damon Runyon would have kept that line.

In fact, there no longer is a script. Jones muttered some vague complaints after the fight to HBO about middling motivation, uncertain prospects. Heavyweights, he said, are all he could get up for, and why did he ever take this fight in the first place?

A third fight might not happen, and Tarver, while not on the back roads of Philly again, will have to follow Jones's lead and visit the heavyweight ranks to make serious money or headlines. He's talented and tall enough (6' 2") that the prospect is feasible.

In any case, with that short left hand, Tarver restored the sense of unpredictability that boxing needs; he created the uncertainty that makes it important. The roar at Mandalay had hardly subsided before people looked at each other and asked, Now what? □

short Jabs

On the morning of the **Roy Jones–Antonio Tarver** bout, promoter **Don King** announced **Félix Trinidad**'s comeback fight, an Oct. 2 date with **Ricardo Mayorga**. Trinidad, off two years since failing to get a rematch with **Bernard Hopkins**, was coming back for an eventual shot at Jones (oops). The former welterweight said his weight during retirement was "in the frontier of 200 pounds." . . . **Zab Judah**, five weeks from his rematch loss to **Cory Spinks**, gave an indifferent performance on the undercard, barely beating aged veteran **Rafael Piñeda**.

JOHN LOCHER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP (JONES); JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

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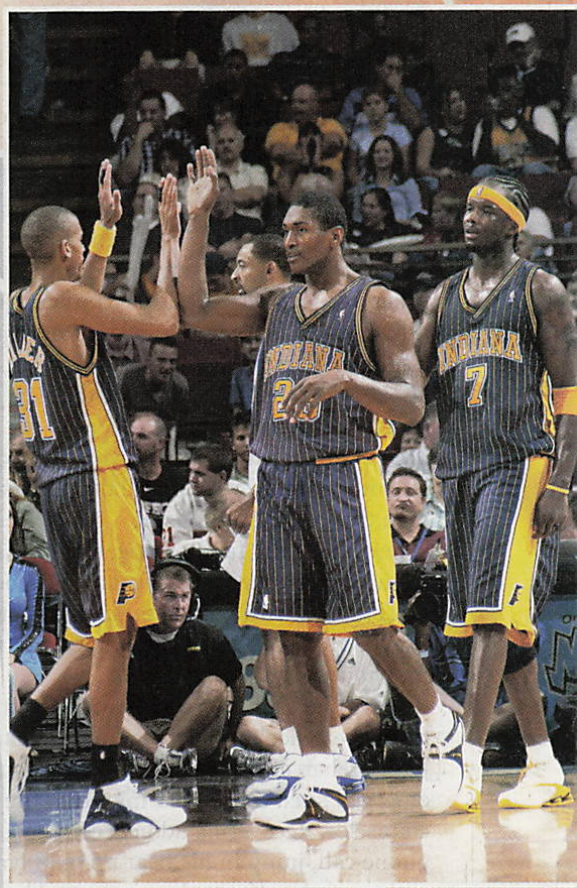
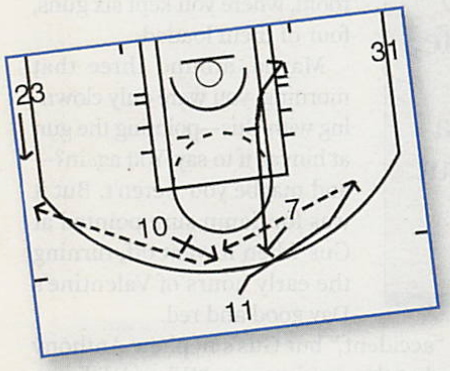
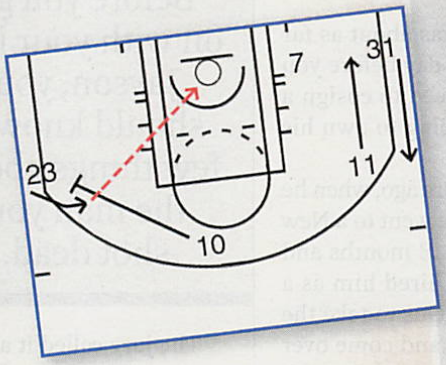
The Playbooks of the NBA Playoffs

Final in a series of five team breakdowns by TNT NBA analyst **Mike Fratello**

THE PACERS HAVE great flexibility in this double high-post set, which can be run on either side of the floor. They can run a high pick-and-roll to get Jamaal Tinsley (11) in the lane for a score or a pass to an open teammate, they can find Jermaine O'Neal (7) on the roll to the basket or in the low post, or they can reverse the ball to the other side of the court. As Tinsley brings the ball upcourt, Jeff Foster (10) is high left, and O'Neal is high right. Ron Artest (23) and Reggie Miller (31) occupy the left and right corners. Tinsley chooses to go right, O'Neal sets a screen, and the two play pick-and-roll *(below left)*. If Tinsley doesn't turn the corner and get in the lane, then he looks for O'Neal on the roll to the basket for a layup or post-up. Foster fills the top of the circle to create a high-low post situation for the two big men. Tinsley can always hit his shooters in the corners, or he can pass back out to Foster, which he does here *(below right)*. Foster then has two options: He can look for O'Neal down low, or he can reverse the ball to Artest and play pick-and-roll. Here Foster passes to Artest and screens for him. Artest can turn the corner and drive the lane, pass back to Foster for a jump shot or pull up for the jumper himself. In this instance, he shoots.







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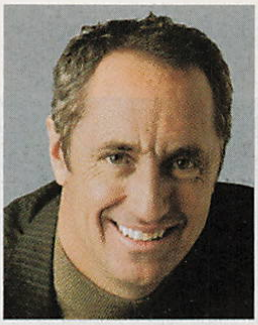
Blind Justice



by Rick Reilly

HEY, CONGRATULATIONS, Jayson Williams.

Looks like you won't be going to the clink for shooting and killing that limousine driver. All the jury nailed you for was covering up something the jury said wasn't a crime. Neat trick, huh?

You beat the most serious charges. Unless they retry you for the reckless manslaughter thing (the jury was deadlocked) you might only do some house arrest. And since you live in a 31,000-square-foot mansion on a 65-acre lot with two par-3 golf holes, a skeet range and an ATV track—paid for courtesy of the New Jersey Nets—that ain't exactly Leavenworth.

But before you go on with your life, some of us just want to let you know a few things about the man you shot dead and then tried to tar as a suicide.

See, that's the funny thing. Gus Christofi was about as far from suicide that day as a man could be. The day before you blasted him with your shotgun, his sister agreed to cosign a loan for him. Gus was so pumped. He was going to own his first house. At age 55.

Gus's life really didn't begin until about 10 years ago, when he finally beat alcoholism and heroin addiction. He went to a New Jersey rehab center called Freedom House for 18 months and emerged such a changed man that the place hired him as a counselor. Recovering addicts could count on Gus to take the phone call, jump in his beat-up old Plymouth and come over with enough coffee and patience and love to get them through a wicked night.

You should've seen the funeral, Jayson. It was packed. Hundreds of people, many of whom Gus's relatives didn't even know. "I can't even tell you how many people came up to me and said, 'Your uncle saved my life,' " says Anthony Christofi Jr., Gus's nephew. "Or they said, 'Your uncle saved my boy's life.' It was amazing."

How's that for irony? You, a guy whose blood-alcohol level was still over the legal limit eight hours after the shooting, killed a guy who thought he was finally safe from booze. Boy, was he wrong.

Really, life was just about as good as it had ever been for Gus that night. He was sober, reunited with his family and doing great at the limo company. In fact, he was so well-liked there that when the job came up to drive your party from a Globetrotters game to a restaurant, the owner surprised Gus with the trip, seeing as how Gus was such a huge sports fan.

If you have a comment for Rick Reilly, send it to reilly@siletters.com.

Gus even bought one of those little disposable cameras to take a few pictures. Of course, maybe it wasn't such a Kodak moment when you—as people later testified—made fun of Gus, swore at him, called him a "stoolie" and a "fed," and, when Gus got up to leave the restaurant, told him, "Sit back down and get your shine box, kid." Then you said, "I'm only kidding with you, man." Hilarious.

Gus must have really felt clammy, though, when you got the gun down from the cabinet. Gus hated guns, had hated them since he was a kid and his dad would invite him to go hunting. You can't shoot those rabbits, Dad, he pleaded. You just can't.

Gus would've hated hanging with you, Jayson, since you once allegedly shot your own rottweiler in the head, shot out the tires of a security truck at the Meadowlands and accidentally shot close to New York Jets receiver Wayne Chrebet. Do you realize how many times you mentioned guns in your autobiography? Twenty-five empty shells were also found in your master bedroom, where you kept six guns, four of them loaded.

> Before you go on with your life, Jayson, you should know a few things about the man you shot dead.

Maybe, around three that morning, you were only clowning with Gus—pointing the gun at him as if to say, You again?—and maybe you weren't. But it was for damn sure pointed at Gus when it went off, turning the early hours of Valentine's Day good and red.

The jury called it an "accident," but Gus's nephew Anthony wants to know exactly what the *accident* was. "When Williams got drunk?" Anthony asks. "When he got the gun out of the cabinet? When it went off? To me, if Williams [shoots] a hole in his floor or his ceiling, that's an accident. If the hole is in my uncle's chest, that's reckless."

You ought to know that you left a pretty big hole in Gus's family, too, Jayson. The little kids still cry when they think about their uncle. Gus's niece Maria El Hadidi has nightmares about his blood-soaked shirt. And his relatives all want to spit when they remember some of the things said by the jurors, like the woman who announced, "He didn't have the look of a cold-blooded killer. I didn't see it in his eyes." You know you're in good shape when the prosecutors aren't exactly a Dream Team and the jurors are calling you by your first name and looking at eyes, not evidence, right?

But you know what really makes the family push away their supper plates? This: As Gus lay there bleeding, some witnesses said, the first thing you hollered was, "Oh, my God! My life is over!"

Wrong life, pal. □

PETER READ MILLER

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